# ROMAN SOCIETY

IN THE

# LAST CENTURY OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

**ROMAN SOCIETY FROM NERO TO MARCUS AURELIUS**

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IN THE

## LAST CENTURY OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE

BY

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# PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THIS second edition of a work, which has met with such a generous reception both from the educated public and from learned critics, has not been fundamentally altered. It is possible that materials, so fragmentary and gleaned from so many sources, might here and there have been arranged in an order more satisfactory to the critical reader. On the other hand, it is not improbable that something of the freshness of the original impression derived from the authorities might be lost in an effort to obtain a more perfect sequence. At the same time the opportunity of a reprint has been used to make a good many minor changes. An occasional looseness of expression has been amended; statements which seemed too strong or incautious have occasionally been toned down; and some slips as to fact, or the form of proper names, have been corrected. A few additional references have been inserted in the notes, especially to Friedländer's *Sittengeschichte Roms*, which, although it deals only with the society of the first and second centuries, may be instructively used for purposes of comparison with the

society of the later Empire. Lastly, a table of the more important dates of the period has been added, with the object of facilitating the perusal of a book in which some knowledge of the general history is necessarily assumed.

*6th July* 1899.

# PREFACE

A FEW words of preface seem to be necessary to explain the object of this book, and the limits within which the writer has wished to confine it. It is perhaps superfluous to say that nothing like a general history of the period has been attempted. That is a task which has been already accomplished by abler hands. The subject of this work is mainly what it professes to be, the inner life and thoughts of the last three generations in the Empire of the West. If external events are referred to, it is only because men's private fortunes and feelings cannot be severed from the fortunes of the State.

The limits of the period covered by this study of Roman society have not been arbitrarily chosen. The last hundred years of the Western Empire seem marked off both by momentous events, and, for the student of society, by the authorities at his command. The commencement of the period coincides roughly with the passage of the Gothic hordes across the Danube, the accession of Gratian and Theodosius, the termination of the long truce between paganism and the Christian Empire, and the reopening of the conflict which, within twenty years, ended in the final prohibition of heathen

rites. It closes, not only with the deposition of the last shadowy Emperor of the West, but with the practical extinction of Roman power in the great prefecture of the Gauls. Perhaps even more obvious are the lines drawn by the fullest authorities for our subject. The earliest extant letters of Symmachus, which describe the relations of the last generation of great pagan nobles, belong to the years 376–390. The literary and political activity of Ausonius coincides with the same years, and from his poems we derive an invaluable picture of a provincial society in the reigns of Gratian and Theodosius. A searching light is thrown on the same generation by some of S. Jerome's letters, by the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius, and by many Inscriptions. At the other end of our period we are almost equally fortunate in our information. The works of Apollinaris Sidonius of Auvergne are a priceless revelation of the state of society, both in Rome and in Gaul, from the accession of Avitus till the final triumph of the Visigothic power.

Nor is there wanting a certain bond of union among these and other scattered materials when they are closely scrutinised. At the beginning of the period, Roman society is indeed sharply divided in a determined religious struggle, and the sharpness of the contrast is rendered more decided by the increasing fervour of asceticism. But at the hottest moment of the conflict there was a mass of scepticism, lukewarmness, or wavering conformity, between the confines of the opposing creeds. The influences which inspired that attitude had not spent their force at the close of the fourth century. When the terrors of the anti-pagan laws had produced an outward submission, the Christianity of many of the noble and

lettered class seems to have been far from enthusiastic. The discipline of the schools was a powerful rival of the Church. Men who had had that training were steeped in the lingering sentiment of paganism, and looked with distrust, or even with contempt, on the severer form of Christian renunciation. One can scarcely doubt that Sidonius, in his early manhood, and some of his friends down to the fall of the Western Empire, would have been far more at home in the company of Symmachus or Flavianus than in that of S. Paulinus of Nola.

It would, of course, be impossible to treat of society in such a period without some reference to those who devoted themselves to the higher ideals of the Christian life. But they belong rather to the future. Our interest in these pages must be concentrated on those whose greatest pride it was to preserve and transmit the traditions of the past. The main purpose of this work is to give some account of that worldly society which, in its ideals, tone, and external fortunes, had undergone but little change between the reign of Gratian and the dethronement of Romulus Augustulus.

The period is an obscure one, and the materials are widely scattered. The difficulty of arranging them in an orderly view is not slight; and the writer is painfully conscious that a critical eye may easily discover omissions and faults of treatment. His only claim is that he has made an honest attempt to answer a question which has often presented itself to his own mind—How were men living, and what were their thoughts and private fortunes, during that period of momentous change?

It only remains for the author to express his warmest thanks to his old pupil and friend, the Rev. Charles Plummer, Vice-President and Librarian of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, for the kind care with which he has gone over the proof-sheets.

*4th October* 1898.

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# BOOK IV

# THE BARBARIANS AND THE FUTURE OF THE EMPIRE

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# BOOK V

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# BOOK I

## THE TENACITY OF PAGANISM

# CHAPTER I

## THE PAGAN ARISTOCRACY AND THE CONFUSION OF PARTIES

In spite of the moral force which ensured the future to the Christian faith, its final triumph was long delayed. Religious conservatism is, of all forms of attachment to the past, probably the most difficult to overcome. It has its seat in the deepest and most powerful instincts of human nature, which, when they have once twined themselves around a sacred symbol of devotion, are only torn away after a long struggle. But this form of attachment is peculiarly obstinate when it is identified, as religion has so often been, with patriotic reverence for the glory of an ancient state, which in the omens of its birth, the election of its magistrates, the daily work of peaceful administration, or in the stress of war, and the exultation of conquest, has for many ages recognised the same divine sanction and help. Superstitious fancy, or the seductive charm of sacred festivals, may keep the vulgar constant to the old faith; but the class which in high office has been specially charged with the safety of the State, and which, by a chain of real or imagined ancestry, is more closely identified with its career, is penetrated with a deeper conservatism than that of the common herd. Antiquarian and literary culture also reinforce religious sentiment, or replace it, when it has

decayed. Even the sceptical epicurean, to whom all faiths are alike, will prefer that which has the refined charm of immemorial possession, and which has received an added dignity and glory from the magic touch of genius, and the reverence of heroic characters.

For nearly a hundred years the emperors had intermittently denounced the practice of the rites of heathenism. Yet the edict[1] which closes the long series of anti-pagan laws shows, by the fierceness of its tone, and the severity of the penalties with which it threatens the offender, that the spirit of paganism was not yet crushed. In the very years in which Theodosius was issuing the laws which were to extinguish the ancient superstition, men were reviving a prophecy that the religion of the Cross was about to reach its final term,[2] and the most solemn pagan rites were publicly celebrated.[3] At the close of the fourth century the majority of the Senate were little touched by the Christian faith,[4] although the wives and daughters of some of them had adopted its most ascetic form. Staunch adherents of paganism still held the Urban or Pretorian prefecture in the reign of Honorius. They might still meet, apparently with no thought of the imminent triumph of the Church, to hear one of their number expound the sacerdotal lore of Rome,[5] and another set forth the Stoic or Alexandrian interpretation of the myths, or the command of augural science possessed by Virgil. Their great poet, as if he were writing in the age of Augustus, could invite the Christian Emperor Honorius to survey the shrines of the gods,[6] which still in all their old splendour surrounded the imperial palace

[1] *Nov. Th.* tit. iii.

[2] *S.* Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, xviii. 53. See Seeck's *Symmachus*, cxviii.

[3] *C.I.L.* vi. 512.

[4] Seeck's *Sym.* liv. ; Zos. iv. 59. For the opposite view cf. Prud. *c. Sym.* i. 566 ; Ambros. *Ep.* 17, 10 ; Rauschen, *Jahrbücher der Chr. Kirche*, p. 119.

[5] Macrob. *Sat.*

[6] Claudian, *de Sex. Cons Hon.* 44.

with a divine guardianship. Another pagan poet,[1] who had been prefect of the city, a quarter of a century after the death of Theodosius, could pour contempt on the Christian profession, and rejoice at the sight of the villagers of Etruria gaily celebrating the rites of Osiris in the springtime. Magic and divination of every form had long been under the ban of the State. Yet a prefect of Honorius proposed to employ the Tuscan sorcerers,[2] who offered the aid of their arts against Alaric, and Litorius, fighting against a successor of Alaric in Gaul, consulted the pagan seers before his last battle, under the walls of Toulouse.[3] In the last years of the Western Empire, the diviners of Africa were practising their arts among the nominal Christians of Aquitaine.[4]

Long after the external rites of heathenism had been suppressed, the pagan tone and spirit retained its hold on men's imaginations. The obstinate, unchanging conservatism of the Roman character never displayed itself more strikingly than in the age when Roman institutions were tottering. That race, so tenacious of the past, yet so bold and aggressive, always strove to disguise fundamental changes, and to retain the charm of old associations under altered circumstances. In this, as in other respects, the Church carried on the tradition of pagan Rome. The prejudices and attachments of a thousand years, which might be proof against the fervid dialectic of S. Augustine, were gently trained by pious arts to turn to other objects of love and devotion.[5] She followed the advice of the great pontiff, to break the idols and consecrate the churches. The cycle of the Christian year was in many points adapted to the pagan calendar. The cult of saints and martyrs was established at the very altars where incense had been offered

[1] Rutil. Namat. i. 440, 375.
[2] Zos. v. 41.
[3] Prosp. *Chron.* 439.
[4] Apollin. Sidon. *Ep.* viii. 11.
[5] For a specimen see S. Paulin. Nol. *Carm.* 27, 548-580; the principle of accommodation is stated in S. Aug. *Ep.* 47, § 3.

to Mars or Bacchus.[1] At Naples, lamps burning before the image of the Virgin took the place of those before the family gods.[2] The worship of the Virgin mother weaned the Sicilian peasant from the worship of a goddess of less immaculate fame

Many a literary noble of Aquitaine in the fifth century was probably as really pagan as the peasant who bowed before the old altar on Mount Eryx. His grandfather in the days of Ausonius may have conformed to Christianity; some of his friends might have sold their lands, and followed S. Paulinus to Nola or S. Jerome to Bethlehem; but he himself was often as little of a Christian as the men who, three generations before him, had pleaded with the Emperor to leave the Altar of Victory in the Senate-house. Like Ausonius, he might pay a cold and perfunctory homage to Christ,[3] and visit the neighbouring town for the Easter festival; but the whole tone of his thoughts and life was inspired by the memories of the heathen past. With no belief in the old gods, he was steeped in the literary spirit and culture of paganism. The Roman schools had moulded him far more than the teaching of the Church. The unbroken academic tradition of eight hundred years, coming down from the age of the great sophists, was a tremendous force; and it was a force which repelled all novelty, and all idealism which looked to the future rather than to the past. All the literature on which he had been nourished was created in the atmosphere of paganism, and teemed with mythological allusions. His teachers were saturated with Hellenism, which to the end maintained a cold and distant attitude to Christian devotion. From his earliest years his gaze was turned to the great deeds of Roman heroes who had worshipped

[1] Ozanam, *La Civ. au V^me siècle*, i. 231.
[2] Maury, *La Magie*, p. 152.
[3] Auson. *Ephem.* ii. 15; *Ep.* 10, 17; *Idyll.* 11, 88.

Mars and Jupiter,[1] who had read the fate of their campaigns in the flash of lightning or the flight of birds or the entrails of the victim at the altar, who had consulted the Chaldaean seer about their objects of ambition or their hour of death.[2] If he could not rival the achievements of these great sons of Rome, he could still add his name to the Fasti in which theirs appeared. He could maintain the stately forms of the past, and the literary and antiquarian tradition which he regarded as the finest essence of the national life.

In the final stand which paganism made against imperial edicts and the polemic of the Church, many different forces were arrayed. Sensuality and gross superstition in the degraded masses clung to the rites of magic and divination, to the excitement of the circus, and the obscenities of the theatre. And these base influences long maintained their hold. But it would be a grave mistake to suppose that the old faith rested only on ignorant superstition and sensuality, or on the hard formalism of the old Roman mythology. For many generations the cults of Eastern origin, the worship of Isis,[3] of the Great Mother, and Mithra, had satisfied devotional feelings which could find little nourishment in the cold abstractions of old Roman religion, or the brilliant anthropomorphism of Greece. The inscriptions of the fourth century reveal the enduring power of these Syrian or Egyptian worships.[4] They cultivated an ecstatic devotion, and gave relief to remorse for sin.

[1] S. Augustine had a genuine admiration for great Romans of the early ages, *e.g.* Regulus, *de Civ. Dei*, i. c. xv. Cf. S. Jerome's *Ep.* 60, § 5, quid memorem Romanos duces quorum virtutibus quasi quibusdam stellis latinae micant historiae?

[2] The grandfather of Ausonius was himself an astrologer. *Parent.* iv. 17 : In coeli numeros et conseria sidera fati callebas, studium dissimulanter agens. S. Aug. had consulted the books of astrologers (libris genethliacorum deditus) in his youth. *Conf.* iv. 3.

[3] See Réville, *Rel. unter den Sev.* i. c. 2 and 3, pp. 52, 59, 76.

[4] *C. I. L.* vi. 512, 749-754, 499-504. Cf. Renan, *M. Aurèle*, p. 579 ; *infra*, p. 64.

They had their mystic brotherhoods and guilds, with an initiatory baptismal rite.[1] They had their rules and periods of fasting and abstinence from all the pleasures of sense. They had a priesthood set apart from the world with the tonsure and a peculiar habit. And, in initiation to their mysteries, a profound impression was made on the imagination and feelings of the novice. The baptism of blood, of which many a stone record remains, was the crowning rite of the later paganism, relieving the guilty conscience, and regarded as a new birth.[2] It can hardly be doubted that, while these cults may not have supplied the moral tone and discipline, which was the great want in all heathen systems, they stimulated a devotional feeling which was unknown to the native religions of Greece and Rome. There was, moreover, in this later pagan movement, penetrated as it was by syncretism, a decided tendency to monotheistic faith.[3] Praetextatus held the most prominent place among the last generation who openly worshipped Isis, Mithra, Hecate, and Magna Mater.[4] Yet, in the *Saturnalia*, he is put forward to explain that, under the many names of the Pantheon, it is the attributes of one Great Power which are really adored.[5]

The inner monotheism of the loftier minds in paganism was the fruit of a millennium of the freest and most disinterested philosophic movement in history. More than five centuries before Christ, Greek speculation had lifted men's minds to the conception of a mysterious Unity behind the phantasmagoria of sense.[6] In the fifth century after Christ, Macrobius, at once Pagan and Neoplatonist, holds fast to the doctrine of the Infinite

[1] Apul. *Met.* xi. c. 23; Tertull. *de Baptismo*, c. 5, nam et sacris quibusdam per lavacrum initiantur, Isidis alicujus et Mithrae. Cf. Juv. vi. 522; Porphyr. *de Abst.* iv. p. 367.

[2] Prudent. *Peristeph.* x. 1021.

[3] Réville, ii. c. 10, p. 285.

[4] *C.I.L.* vi. 1779.

[5] Macrob. *Sat.* i. 17.

[6] Arist. *Met.* i. 5, *Ξενοφάνης . . τὸ ἓν εἶναί φησι τὸν θεόν.*

One,[1] from whom, by a chain of successive emanations, the Universe proceeds. If this lofty conception of the Divine Nature often lent itself to the support of systems which seemed to degrade and fritter away the central idea of pure religion the philosophic supporter of paganism was ready with an explanation. He would have said the Infinite can neither be known nor expressed by finite powers. Yet the human spirit instinctively turns with reverence to the Father of all spirits, and, in its helplessness, can only find utterance for its yearnings in symbolism of word or act. Plato sought an image of the Infinite Good in the Sun.[2] Common worshippers adore it under the names of Jupiter, Apollo, Isis, or Mithra.[3] The Great Reality can by any human soul be only dimly conceived, and expressed only in a rude fragmentary way. We see the Divine One in religious myths "as through a glass darkly." Yet, if we purge mythology of the gross fancies of rude ages, the myths may be used as a consecrated language of devotion. They are only faint shadows of the Infinite One, from which we are separated by an impassable gulf; yet they represent the collective thought and feeling of the past about God. They are only symbols, but a religious symbol is doubly sacred when it has ministered to the devotion of many generations. In some such way the philosopher reconciled himself to the ancient worships. Yet although, like Longinianus,[4] a correspondent of S. Augustine, he might believe that the ancient sacred rites had a real value, he believed also that the one "great, incomprehensible, and ineffable Creator" was to be approached only by the way of piety, truth, and purity in word and deed.

Philosophy and the mysticism of the East had given

[1] Macrob. *Com. in Somn. Scip.* i. 17, 12.

[2] *Rep.* bk. vi. p. 508; *cf. Heilenism*, p. 176.

[3] Plut. *de Is.* c. 67; *cf.* Vacherot's exposition of the creed of Porphyry, *Ecole d'Alexandrie*, ii. pp. 111, 112.

[4] S. Aug. *Ep.* 234.

a new life to the religion of Rome. But old Roman patriotic feeling was perhaps the most powerful support of paganism in its final conflict with the Church. Men like Symmachus, Flavianus, and Volusianus were often sceptics at heart. They may have believed vaguely in some Divine Power, and were ready to admit that He might be approached by many ways; but their real devotion was to Roma Dea,[1] the idealised genius of the Latin race, with its twelve centuries of victorious warfare and skilful worldwide organisation. In every step of that marvellous career, their ancient gods had been their partners. The forms of its ancestral religion were inextricably intertwined with the whole fabric of the State.[2] Imbedded in law, language, literature, the deepest instincts of the people, her ancient worship seemed inseparable from the very identity of Rome. The true Roman, even though his religious faith might not be very deep or warm, inherited the most ancient belief of his race that the gods of a city were sharers in all its fortunes. Apostasy from them was identified with a languid patriotism, and was regarded as the cause of public calamities.[3] The complete and literal acceptance of the Christian faith seemed to mean a refusal to perform the duties of citizen or soldier, a scornful abandonment of the old traditions of culture, even a loss of faith in the mission of Rome.[4]

In that age, as in our own, there were widely different conceptions of the meaning of the Christian profession. There can be little doubt that there was a vast mass of interested and perfunctory conformity to the religion which had become the established religion of the State. The philosophic scepticism and worldly tone of the cultivated pagan were often not much altered when he

[1] Claudian, *de Bell. Gild.* 46; *de Bell. Get.* 50; Rutil. Namat. i. 47-132.

[2] Sym. *Rel.* 3, ergo Romanae religiones ad Romana jura non pertinent?

[3] *Ib.* 3, sacrilegio exaruit annus.

[4] Auson. *Ep.* xxv. 44-74.

transferred his nominal allegiance from his ancestral gods to Christ. There was a worldliness and easy self-indulgence in the higher rank of nominally Christian society, which moved alike the indignation of the ascetic and the good-humoured ridicule of the pagan observer.[1] But a large and growing class took the claims of Christ more seriously. To carry out to the letter the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, in the midst of a society penetrated with individualism and easygoing sensuality, seemed a hopeless attempt.[2] The aspiration after Christian perfection could be satisfied only by a withdrawal from the contamination of the world, and a complete renunciation of the duties of citizenship. This spirit has by some modern historians been made responsible for the resignation of the defence of the Empire to barbarian mercenaries, for the decay of industry and wealth, for the decline of letters and art, and the darkness of a thousand years.[3] And there is some of the religious literature of that period which gives a colour to part of this indictment. In the very years when the great invasions were desolating the provinces of the West, and when the hosts of Radagaisus and Alaric were threatening the heart of the Empire, S. Paulinus wrote a remarkable letter to a soldier who felt himself drawn to the higher Christian life.[4] In this epistle the ascetic ideal is expounded with a breadth and absence of qualification which shock and amaze the modern reader. The evangelical counsels of perfection are construed in the sternest and most uncompromising fashion. Christian

[1] Hieron. *c. Johann. Hierosol.* 8, miserabilis Praetextatus qui designatus consul est mortuus, homo sacrilegus et idolorum cultor, solebat ludens beato papae Damaso dicere: "facite me Romanae ecclesiae episcopum et ero protinus Christianus." As a comment on this *mot* of Praetextatus read the reflections on the conflict for the papal seat in 367 in Amm. Marc. 27, 3, 14.

[2] S. Paulin. Nol. *Carm.* x. 33, 316; cf. Renan, *M. Aurèle*, p. 627.

[3] Renan, *M. Aurèle*, pp. 595, 603, la vie humaine est suspendue pour mille ans.

[4] S. Paulin. *Ep.* xxv.

obedience is boldly represented as inconsistent with the duties of citizenship and the relations of family life. The love of father or mother, of wife or child, the desire for riches or honour, devotion to one's country, are all so many barriers to keep the soul from Christ. There is not a word to indicate that a Christian life, worthy of the name, could be made compatible with the performance of worldly duties. The rich are condemned for ever, in the words of prophet or evangelist.[1] The soldier is a mere shedder of blood,[2] doomed to eternal torment.[3] There is no possibility of serving both Christ and Caesar. This was the way in which secular life was regarded by the voluntary exiles who followed S. Jerome, in the last years of the fourth century, to the convents at Bethlehem, or who retired to the Syrian or Egyptian deserts, the islands of the Tuscan Sea, and the hermitages in the woods of Gaul. Such a movement might well seem to an old-fashioned Roman as a renunciation, not only of citizenship, but of all the hard-won fruits of civilisation and social life. If this was the highest form of Christian life, as its devotees proclaimed it to be, then Christianity was the foe, not only of the old religion, but of the social and political order which Rome had given to the world. It is hardly to be wondered at that the monks were execrated alike by the mob[4] and by the cultivated pagan noble.[5]

Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that in general society the line between the two camps was sharply drawn. As a matter of fact, there was on either side a large wavering class, half-hearted, sceptical, or formalist. We

[1] S. Paulin. *Ep.* xxv. § 2, et iterum per prophetam ait, "Exterminati sunt omnes qui exaltati fuerant auro et argento." In Evangelio quoque clamat . . . "vae vobis divitibus," etc.

[2] *Ib.* § 3, mortis minister est.

[3] *Ib.* § 1, quod si maluerimus Caesari militare quam Christo . . . ad Gehennam transferemur.

[4] Hieron. *Ep.* 39, § 5, quousque genus detestabile non urbe pellitur? non lapidibus obruitur?

[5] Rutil. Namat. i. 440.

know, on the testimony of Libanius,[1] that there were many sham converts to Christianity, whose conformity was due either to fear or motives of selfish ambition. Such men were ready to return to their old faith as lightly as they had conformed to the new. Apostasy to heathenism became so frequent that Gratian and Theodosius felt bound to restrain it by severe legislation.[2] The upper class were for generations far more united by the old social and literary tradition that they were divided by religious belief. There were friends of Sidonius living at the close of the Western Empire who were at heart as pagan as Symmachus who saw paganism finally proscribed.[3] In truth, the line between Christian and pagan was long wavering and uncertain. We find adherents of the opposing creeds side by side even in the same family at the end of the fourth century. Mixed marriages (*imparia matrimonia*) were evidently not uncommon. Any one acquainted with the life of S. Jerome will remember Paula, the great Roman lady, who was the leader of the aristocratic exodus to the Holy Places.[4] She gave up all her vast wealth to maintain the religious houses which she founded at Bethlehem.[5] Her whole soul was absorbed in the study of the Scriptures, and in the thought of the life to come.[6] Yet Paula was united in early youth to a noble named Julius Toxotius,[7] who boasted of his descent from Aeneas, and who refused to abandon the worship of his ancestors. Their son, the younger Toxotius, who, at any rate in his youth, was also a staunch pagan, was married to Laeta,[8] another devout friend of S. Jerome, to whom he addressed a letter on the proper education for a Christian maiden.

[1] *Orat. pro Templis*, ed. Reiske, p. 176.

[2] *C. Th.* xvi. tit. 7; cf. Godefroy's note to xvi. 7, 1; Rauschen, *Jahrbücher*, p. 153.

[3] Apollin. Sid. *Ep.* viii. 9; viii. 11.

[4] Hieron. *Ep.* 108.

[5] *Ib.* § 30, testis est Jesus, ne unum quidem nummum ab ea filiae relictum.

[6] *Ib.* § 26.

[7] *Ib.* § 4; Thierry's *S. Jérome*, pp. 26, 27.

[8] *Ib.* 107, § 1.

Laeta herself was the offspring of a mixed marriage. Her mother was a Christian, and her father was one of the most distinguished chiefs of the pagan aristocracy, Publilius Caeonius Albinus.[1] The affectionate relations of this household seem to have been quite undisturbed by the difference of creed among its members. S. Jerome speaks of Albinus in a friendly tone as a most learned and distinguished man, and sketches a pleasant picture of the old heathen pontiff listening to his little grand-daughter singing her infant hymns to Christ. Albinus, like many of his class in that day, was plainly tolerant in matters of religion; yet he was a colleague of Symmachus in the pontifical college, and he figures in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius as a great master of the antiquarian lore of old Rome.[2]

In general society the cultivated sceptic or pagan appears to have often maintained a friendly intimacy even with the most uncompromising champions of the Church. The correspondence of S. Augustine reveals the singular freedom and candour with which the great religious questions of the time were debated between the cultivated members of the two parties. Among the friends of the great bishop was Volusianus, brother of that Laeta to whom we have just referred.[3] Volusianus, although he is said to have been afterwards converted,[4] was at this time, if not a decided pagan, like his father the pontiff, at any rate little disposed to accept the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. He seems to have lived in a circle which debated not only the old philosophical questions, but those doctrines of the Christian creed which present the greatest obstacles to the reason.

[1] His restoration of a ruined Capitol at Thamugad in Numidia is commemorated in an inscription of the time of Valentinian and Valens, *C.I.L.* viii. 2388; cf. *C.I.L.* viii. 6975, which contains the dedication by him of a chapel to Mithra; cf. Macrob. *Sat.* i. 2, 15; Hieron. *Ep.* 107, § 1.

[2] Macrob. *Sat.* i. iii.

[3] S. Aug. *Ep.* 132; cf. Seeck's *Sym.* clxxix.

[4] Baron. *Annal. Eccl.* v. 728 (quoted in Seeck's *Sym.* clxxix.).

At one of these gatherings[1] the difficulties of the miraculous conception of Christ, and of the Incarnation of the omnipresent Ruler of the Universe in a single human form, subject to all the changes, wants, and limitations of humanity, were raised. And Volusianus, in a letter full of deferential admiration for Augustine's character and learning, asks for some light on these puzzling questions. In another letter,[2] Marcellinus, who was a friend of both, submits, on behalf of Volusianus, some other problems as to the apparent inconstancy of the Deity in abrogating the Jewish law which He had Himself given, and the possibility of obeying the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount in the government of a dominant state. On both sides there is an urbanity and an absence of partisan heat, which show the strength of the ancient culture in the fierce conflict of beliefs. The same tone is conspicuous in the correspondence of the pagan philosopher Longinianus and Augustine.[3] Their letters seem to show that the two men were on terms of friendly intercourse, and although Longinianus cannot give a satisfactory answer to the question, "What think you of Christ?" a devout monotheism supplied some common ground with the Christian bishop, who deals in a singularly gentle tone with the philosopher's lingering and vaguely expressed attachment to ancient mystic rites. Augustine's letter to Lampadius on fatalist superstitions displays even more startling tolerance.[4] Yet Lampadius was a devotee of the pagan belief in astrology and divination. He was Pretorian prefect in the short-lived government established in 409 by the old senatorial party,[5] with Attalus as emperor and Alaric as master of the forces, which was the last attempt of the old pagan spirit to regain the sceptre.

[1] S. Aug. *Ep.* 135.
[2] *Ib.* 136.
[3] *Ib.* 233, 234, 235.
[4] *Ib.* 246.
[5] Zos. vi. 7.

In the circle of Symmachus, which is better known us than any other of that time, there is a striking inte mixture of pagan and Christian, with a reticent suppre sion of all differences on religious questions. Q. Aur lius Symmachus was the chief of the pagan aristocrac the most gallant defender of the old religion in its la struggles for toleration. His ancestors had held t highest office since the days of Constantine,[1] and he hir self had added fresh lustre to the honours of his hou He was regarded as the finest product of the litera tradition of Rome,[2] an *arbiter elegantiarum* whose critic judgments were infallible, the greatest orator of t Senate. Probably, like so many of his class for ages, was a sceptic whose inner creed was a vague monotheis But he cherished a sentimental, or a statesmanlik attachment to the ancient forms of the Roman religic The fortunes and the dignity of Rome were in his ey inseparably linked with her guardian deities.[3] T grandeur and beneficence of her career were for ev associated with the religion of the old Fabii, Decii, a Scipios. There are, indeed, but few direct references religion in his private letters, none to Christianity or t internecine war of faiths which was raging around hi Like Claudian and Macrobius, he seems to shut his ey to the spiritual revolution which in his closing years w sending the world of Western Europe on a new orb To the very end of the legal existence of paganism, maintained the same tranquil, old-world tone abo religion. He records the meetings of the Sacred Colleg and the recurrence of the festival of Magna Mater. H mentions in his letters terrifying prodigies,[4] such as t consul suffectus being thrown from his car, somewhat

[1] Seeck's *Sym.* xl.

[2] Auson. *Idyll.* x.; *Ep.* xvii.; Prudent. *c. Sym.* i. 632:

O linguam miro verborum fonte fluentem,
Romani decus eloquii, cui cedat et ip Tullius . . .

Ambros. *Ep.* 18, 2.

[3] Sym. *Rel.* 3.

[4] *Ep.* vi. 40; i. 49; ii. 34.

the manner of the early annals. When the Vestal Virgins prayed for leave to erect a statue to Vettius Agorius Praetextatus,[1] the man who "possessed the deepest knowledge of sacred things," probably the best and most devout pagan of that age, and a dear friend of Symmachus, he resisted the proposal, partly on the ground of propriety, partly as a violation of ancient usage. Personally the most kindly and humane of men, he demanded of the prefect that an erring Vestal should be surrendered to pontifical authority, to be punished in the cruel old Roman fashion.[2] He once or twice laments the growing neglect of the ancient worship,[3] and prays the gods to pardon it, although he cannot help feeling that it is sometimes due to an unworthy subservience to the feelings of the Court. It seems as if Symmachus was incapable of imagining that the Roman State could ever finally disown the gods in whom the men of her great ages had believed.

Yet the correspondence of Symmachus shows that he lived on terms of friendly and even affectionate intimacy, not only with nominal Christians, but with determined foes of the old religion. In the list of his friends, indeed, almost every shade of belief or of indifference is represented; and there is no better way of understanding the religious condition of that time than to study some of the men with whom the great pagan noble was intimate, from Praetextatus the heathen mystic, to S. Ambrose the great champion of Catholic orthodoxy.

Praetextatus was probably the truest representative of the last generation of paganism. The inscriptions which commemorate his virtues and distinctions are a proof of the space he filled in the eyes of contemporaries.[4]

[1] *Ep.* ii. 36.
[2] *Ib.* ix. 147.
[3] *Ib.* i. 51, nunc aris desse Romanos genus est ambiendi.
[4] *C.I.L.* vi. 1779, 2145. The latter refers to a monument erected to him by the Vestals.

He was proconsul of Achaea in the reign of Julian,[1] after a long retirement of fifteen years,[2] he held Pretorian prefecture in the reign of Theodosius, and designated for the consulship in 385, when he die his sixtieth year. Praetextatus combined all qualities which then constituted the ideal of the Ro noble. He was devoted to letters, had emended M and translated Aristotle. His house is the scene of learned conversations of the *Saturnalia*.[4] As a sta man, he resisted the law of Valentinian I. aga nocturnal rites,[5] which seemed intolerable to his vincial subjects in Greece. When he was prefect of city he gained universal popularity,[6] without offen any party, although he had the difficult duty of m taining order when, in the furious struggle for the p throne, the rival factions of Damasus and Ursinus w slaughtering one another on the pavement of churches.[7] On his death, even S. Jerome,[8] who consi him to outer darkness, agrees with Marcellinus that received the tribute of a universal mourning from populace of Rome. Praetextatus was the most lear theologian and the most enthusiastic devotee in the ra of the last pagan nobles. His monument describes h as augur, priest of Vesta, priest of the sun, curial Hercules, devoted to Liber and the Eleusinian deit neocorus, hierophant, pater patrum, cleansed by the rit the Taurobolium.[9] His wife, Fabia Aconia Paulina, w his partner in all sacred things, and was famous in Roman world for her religious eminence. It is no worthy that Praetextatus is almost the only one of friends to whom the reticent Symmachus mentions

[1] Amm. Marc. xxii. 7, 6.
[2] Seeck's *Sym.* lxxxviii.
[3] Sym. *Ep.* i. 53; cf. Seeck, xxxvii.
[4] Macrob. *Sat.* i. 1.
[5] Zos. iv. 3.
[6] Amm. Marc. xxvii. 9, 8.
[7] *Ib.* xxvii. 3, 12.
[8] *Ep.* 23, ad cujus interit urbs universa commota est.
[9] *C.I.L.* vi. 1779.

subject of religion,[1] although even the pious Praetextatus seems to have sometimes forgotten his sacerdotal duties in the repose of his country-seat in Etruria.[2] When, as Urban prefect, Symmachus announced his death to the Emperor,[3] he described Praetextatus, with the assent of the whole people, as a model of all private and public virtue.

Another name among the pagan friends of Symmachus deserves special mention. Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, a member of the great Anician house,[4] was son of a man who, after long obscurity, rose to prominence in the pagan reaction of Julian. Flavianus was a young man of twenty-seven when Julian came to the throne, and along with Venustus his father,[5] and his cousin Symmachus, obtained a provincial governorship. For twelve years of the reign of Valentinian I. Flavianus was in retirement; but in the reign of Gratian, he, along with Symmachus, shared in the extraordinary ascendency which the circle of Ausonius enjoyed for some years. Flavianus received the vicariate of Africa, Hesperius, the poet's son, being proconsul of the province at the same time. After the manner of the pagan or indifferent governors of the age,[6] Flavianus showed indulgence to the heretics of his district,[7] and incurred a rebuke from the orthodox Emperor. In the reign of Theodosius he regained the favour of the Court, and was made prefect

[1] Sym. *Ep.* i. 47, 48, 51.

[2] *Ib.* i. 45.

[3] *Ib.* x. 10.

[4] The Symmachi also belonged to it; cf. Seeck, cii., and the Stemma on p. xl.

[5] Amm. Marc. xxiii. 1, 4, Venusto vicariam commisit Hispaniae. This is the Venustus of Macrob. i. 5, 13, Flavianus—mirando viro Venusto patre praestantior.

[6] Cf. the efforts of the Priscillianists to have their cause brought before a friendly governor in Spain, Sulp. Sev. *Chron.* ii. 49.

[7] S. Aug. *Ep.* 87, § 8, to a Donatist bishop, describes Flavianus as "partis vestrae homo." Cf. *C. Th.* xvi. 6, 2, addressed to Flavianus in 377, ordering him to suppress Anabaptism; and xvi. 5, 4, 378, to Hesperius, in which the continuance of heretical worship is attributed to "dissimulatio judicum." But the date of the law is doubtful. Cf. Godefroy's notes and Seeck's *Sym.* cxiv.

of Italy in 383, his two sons also being elevated to governorships of provinces. After a brief interval, he once more rose to favour and held the prefecture in 391.[1] But his career was drawing to a disastrous close. Although he wielded such power under the Emperor who finally proscribed the heathen ritual, Flavianus was an obstinate reactionary in religion. He became the heart and soul of the brief pagan restoration under Eugenius. He obtained the restoration of the altar of Victory to the Senate-house,[2] and of their endowments to the sacred colleges. By lavish hospitality, and promises of official advancement,[3] he tempted weak-kneed or indifferent Christians to desert the cause of Theodosius and the Church. All the arts of ancient divination were brought into play by the greatest living master of the science.[4] And a prophetic verse was recalled or invented which foreshadowed the end of the Christian superstition three hundred and sixty-five years after the Passion.[5] The reckoning seemed to tally exactly with the crisis of events. But the gods proved false to their faithful champion; the illusions of the past only led Flavianus and his party to their doom. Amid the tempest which raged over the battle on the Frigidus and gave the victory to Theodosius, Flavianus *more majorum* died by his own hand. He had staked all on the success of the pagan cause and lost. Yet, strange to say, his memory was respected, and even honoured, by the victors. His confiscated estates were afterwards restored to his sons.[6] The Emperor in a message to the Senate deplored the loss to the State and to himself. Nearly forty years

[1] See Seeck's note, 579; Rauschen, *Jahrb.* pp. 150 and 337. Rauschen controverts Seeck's view (*Prol.* cxvii.) that Flavianus was praef. praet. in 389.

[2] Paulin. *vit. Ambros.* c. viii. § 26.

[3] See the *Carm. Paris.* (a poem discovered at the end of a MS. of Prudentius) quoted by Seeck, cxviii.

[4] Sozom. vii. 22, τὰ μέλλοντα ἀκριβοῦν λογιζόμενος ἐπιστήμῃ παντοδαπῇς μαντείας.

[5] *De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 53, 54.

[6] Sym. *Ep.* iv. 19.

after the battle on the Frigidus the Emperors Valentinian and Theodosius did justice to the virtues and distinction of Flavianus in a monument which is still extant.[1] A master of augural lore, a learned historian, and a philosopher, he was one of that band who, when paganism and letters were perishing, united in a single love the literature and the religion of the past.[2]

Several of the great German chiefs, who wielded such power in that age, were among the most intimate friends of Symmachus. Of these some boldly adhered to the religious practices of their ancestors without any hindrance to their advancement. Others conformed to the Church, with more or less intensity of faith. With Stilicho, the autocrat of the early years of Honorius, Symmachus was naturally on the most friendly footing. We can well believe that there would be strong bonds of sympathy between the chief of the party who claimed toleration for paganism, and the statesman who strove to find a *modus vivendi* between Roman and Goth, Catholic and Pagan, and who incurred the anathemas of the bigots of both parties, of Rutilius Namatianus[3] and of Orosius.[4] Richomer, another friend of Symmachus, a Frank chief of the highest character, who never abandoned his ancestral faith,[5] is a remarkable example of the religious confusion of the time. He was on terms of the most friendly character with Libanius, the last of the Hellenists, and yet he rose to be consul and magister militum under a prince engaged in extirpating heathenism.[6] He was a personal friend of Arbogastes and Eugenius, the chiefs of the pagan reaction of 394; yet he was designated to command the cavalry of Theodosius against them when

[1] *C. I. L.* vi. 1783.

[2] Peter's *Gesch. Litt. über die Röm. Kaiserzeit*, ii. 32; cf. i. 137; Seeck's *Sym.* cxv.; Macrob. *Sat.* i. 5, 13.

[3] *Itin.* ii. 41.

[4] Oros. vii. 38.

[5] Liban. *de Vita Sua*, i. p. 136, ἐφοίτα τε καὶ θεοὺς προσκυνοῦντι. Cf. *Ep.* 785, 926.

[6] See the authorities collected in the *Prosopographia of the C. Th.* ed. Ritter.

he was overtaken by death.[1] Another Frank, Ba whatever his own religion may have been,[2] took car have his daughter, the future Empress Eudoxia, brou up a devout Catholic.

Among the correspondents of Symmachus there Christians of many shades of conviction, from the g Bishop of Milan to the trimmers who were ready acquiesce in a pagan restoration under the shad authority of Attalus. The Ambrosius of the letters Symmachus is almost certainly the illustrious st and pastor who, by the force of genius and charac wielded a greater power than any other man in last struggle of paganism with the Christian Empi The man who confronted fearlessly the Arianism Justina,[4] and who forced Theodosius to do penance the massacre of Thessalonica,[5] threw the whole energy a powerful nature into the conflict, so long wavering a doubtful, which gave the final victory to the Chu before he died. When Symmachus, as deputy of Senate, appealed to the Emperor to restore to their ho of assembly the altar of Victory, the most venera symbol of the pagan Empire, S. Ambrose resisted proposal with all the arts of a rhetoric, trained, like that his opponent, in the ancient schools.[6] The two m were the chosen champions of the opposing hosts, a they fought with an equal energy of sentiment or co viction. But although they were so sharply opposed matters of religion, they were connected both by blo and culture. Symmachus writes to the bishop in t tone of an assured and unruffled friendship.[7] In o

[1] Zos. iv. 55.

[2] Seeck, *Sym.* cxl., makes him a Christian on the strength of a singular participle in one of S. Ambrose's Epistles. Cf. Rauschen, *Jahrb. der Christ. Kirche unter dem K. Theod.* p. 204, n. 4; S. Ambros. *Ep.* 57.

[3] Seeck's *Sym.* cxxviii.; Ambros. *de Sat. Excessu*, i. 32. But note in Migne's ed.

[4] Paulin. *vita S. Ambr.* c. § 12.

[5] *Ib.* c. vii. § 24.

[6] *Ib.* c. viii. § 26; Sym. *Rel.*

[7] Sym. *Ep.* iii. 33, 34.

letter he even claims his good offices on behalf of a man who had served under the usurpation of Eugenius. S. Ambrose on his side speaks of Symmachus in a tone of respect for the sincerity of his pagan zeal, and admiration for the skill of his rhetoric.[1]

There are one or two other decided Christians in the list, such as that Vincentius, who, while prefect of Gaul, strove to cultivate the friendship of S. Martin.[2] But most of the other so-called Christian friends of Symmachus had little in common with the enthusiasm of S. Ambrose. Some of them belonged to that large class of waverers and sceptics to whom a religious profession was only a means of safety or of ambition. The most distinguished friend of Symmachus in the high official world was Sextus Petronius Probus. Descended from a long line of consuls,[3] Probus was regarded as the greatest glory of the Anician house.[4] Proconsul of Africa in his twenty-second year, he held the Pretorian prefecture four times, in one case for a term of eight years, and was colleague of the Emperor in the consulship of 371. His rank and virtues are commemorated in many inscriptions, and in a poem of Ausonius addressed to Probus,[5] when he wielded at Sirmium a power second only to that of the Emperor. His wife and his sons were devoted Christians;[6] his granddaughter Demetrias took the vow of virginity. Yet Probus himself was only baptized on his deathbed.[7] And Ammianus Marcellinus more than hints that love of wealth and power was his strongest passion.[8] Caecilianus, who bore a great part in the negotiations with Alaric, was a great friend of S. Augustine as well as of Symmachus.[9]

[1] Ambros. *Ep.* 57, 2, functus est ille partibus suis pro studio et cultu suo.

[2] Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. 25, 6.

[3] Seeck's *Sym.* xci.; *C.I.L.* vi. 1752, 1753, 1756.

[4] Hieron. *Ep.* 130, § 3.

[5] *C.I.L.* vi. 1751-6; Auson. *Ep.* xvi.; cf. Amm. Marc. xxvii. 11, 1.

[6] Prudent. *c. Sym.* i. 551; Hieron. *Ep.* 130, § 3.

[7] *C.I.L.* 1756, senior donatus munere Christi.

[8] Amm. Marc. xxx. 5, 4-7.

[9] Aug. *Ep.* 151, § 14.

But he appears to have been a rather lukewarm Christian; for the saint remonstrates with him for being content at his age to remain a catechumen.

On a lower level than Probus and Caecilianus are two men, among the familiar friends of Symmachus, who had an ephemeral distinction in the years of Alaric's invasion. Their attitude to religion represents that of many of their contemporaries. The Jovius of the letters of Symmachus is probably the believer in chance and the superstitions of astrology whom S. Paulinus laboured to convert from his errors.[1] Yet he began his public career by overturning the temples of heathenism at Carthage.[2] He is praised by Symmachus for his high principle and virtue;[3] but the account which the historian gives of his career seems to convict him either of fickleness or treachery. He was a personal friend of Alaric, and, on the fall of Olympius, the leader of the Catholic reaction, Jovius succeeded him,[4] and resumed the tolerant religious policy of Stilicho, along with an attempt to conciliate Alaric by conceding some of his demands. Having failed to obtain the Emperor's assent to his views, he suddenly took up an attitude of determined hostility to the Gothic chief.[5] Yet within a very short time we find Jovius in the office of Pretorian prefect under Attalus,[6] the puppet emperor whom Alaric had set up. In the breach between Attalus and his patron, Jovius deserted Attalus, as he had deserted Honorius.[7] The believer in mere chance, as the ruling force in the universe, seems, on the more charitable hypothesis, to have allowed his own life to be governed by it. There is only a faint glimmering of any higher principle in his career, when occasionally he showed a certain faith in the Gothic power.

Another great figure in the events of those puzzling

[1] S. Paulin. Nol. *Ep.* xvi.
[2] Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, xviii. 54.
[3] Sym. *Ep.* viii. 30; ix. 59.
[4] Zos. v. 46, 47.
[5] *Ib.* v. 49; Sozom. ix. 7.
[6] Zos. vi. 8.
[7] Olympiod. *Frag.* 13.

years was Priscus Attalus.[1] He was of Asiatic origin. His father had a great literary reputation, was the friend and correspondent of Libanius, and rose to high office.[2] Attalus possessed the superficial literary and rhetorical arts which were then in vogue; he could deliver elaborate orations, write pretty verses,[3] and accompany them on the lyre. As to religion, he was a Hellenist, with no faith either in the old system or the new, but with a sentimental attachment to the past.[4] Yet his brilliant accomplishments gave him a foremost place in the senatorial ranks, and when the city was hard pressed by Alaric he was one of the envoys chosen to lay before the Emperor at Ravenna the miseries of the capital.[5] The mission failed; but Attalus accepted the office of count of the sacred largesses,[6] and shortly afterwards that of prefect of the city. When Alaric, so long mocked by the mingled weakness, perfidy, and insolence of the court at Ravenna, seized the magazines at Ostia, and ordered the Senate, as the price of their safety, to depose Honorius and elect a new chief of the State, their choice fell on Attalus.[7] And surely there was never a more curious spectacle than when the sceptical Hellenist received baptism at the hands of an Arian bishop,[8] to please his Gothic masters, while he gave his sanction to reactionary dreamers like Lampadius and Tertullus, who revived for a moment the arts of divination and the pagan ceremonies of the old Republic.

These men, of such various shades of enthusiasm or indifference, appear to have lived together in perfect amity. The urbane senator, in whose friendship they are united for the study of the historian, seems to have found no more difficulty in his relations with Ambrose

[1] For the authorities as to his career see Seeck's *Symmachus*, clxx.
[2] Amm. Marc. xxviii. 4, 3.
[3] Olympiod. *Frag.* 24.
[4] Sozom. ix. 9.
[5] Zos. v. 44.
[6] *Ib.* v. 44 and 45.
[7] *Ib.* vi. 7.
[8] Sozom. ix. 9.

and Probus than with Flavianus or Praetextatus. They were all during the life of Symmachus united in the service of the State. Pronounced pagans held the prefecture or the consulship under Theodosius and Honorius, and were even their trusted counsellors.[1] It was not till 416 that they were formally excluded from office.[2] Many of these pagan officials had for years in their hands the enforcement of laws against superstitions or heresies with which they themselves sympathised. In the long truce between the hostile camps, the pagan, the sceptic, even the formal, lukewarm Christian, may have come to dream of a mutual toleration which would leave the ancient forms undisturbed. But such men, living in a world of literary and antiquarian illusions, knew little of the inner forces of the new Christian movement. The chiefs of the Church were of a very different mould from the chiefs of the Senate.

[1] Symmachus was consul in 391; Flavianus was prefect of Italy in 391; his son was proconsul of Asia in 383 (Rauschen, p. 148); Richomer was consul in 384 (Rauschen, p. 172). Macrobius, author of the *Saturnalia*, was probably Praef. Praet. of Spain in 399, Procos. of Africa in 410, and Praepositus S. Cubiculi in 422 (*C. Th.* xvi. 10, 15; xi. 28, 6; vi. 8). But there is some doubt. Cf. Godefroy on xi. 28, 6, n. 6; Jan, *Prol. ad Macrob.* v. vi.; Teuffel, *Rom. Lit.* ii. p. 453; Peter, *Gesch. Litt.* i. 142. Rutilius Namatianus was prefect of the City in 414 (*Itin.* i. 157). His father, Lachanius, had been Consularis Tusciae (*ib.* i. 579).

[2] *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 21, qui profano Pagani ritus errore seu crimine polluuntur, nec ad militiam admittantur, nec Administratoris vel Judicis honore decorentur.

# CHAPTER II

## THE LAST CONFLICTS OF PAGANISM WITH THE CHRISTIAN EMPIRE

The sixteenth book of the Theodosian Code contains a series of twenty-five edicts against the practice of pagan rites. It begins with a curt command that superstition shall cease and "the insanity of sacrificial rites shall be abolished."[1] It closes, more than eighty years afterwards, with denouncing the penalty of death against any who still presume to take part in "the damnable practices" so long forbidden by the State.[2] It is true that in the edict of 423 the Emperor seems sanguine that heathenism is almost extinct,[3] and he somewhat mitigates the penalties against those "who are still entangled in the accursed worship of daemons." There is even a curious note of toleration in the law of the same year,[4] which imposes a heavy fine on any person offering violence to Jews or pagans who lived in quietness and outward obedience to the law. But this clemency was probably misunderstood. In country places, sometimes with the connivance of indifferent officials, the old temples were still frequented, and

[1] *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 2, cesset superstitio; sacrificiorum aboleatur insania.

[2] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 25.

[3] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 22 and 23, paganos qui supersunt, quanquam jam nullos esse credamus, legum jamdudum prescripta compescant.

[4] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 24.

sacrifices were still offered more than fifty years after the death of the great Theodosius. The fierce tone of the Novella of 439 proves that legislation had not yet finally subdued the obstinacy of old superstition. The closing enactment in the Code, against the obstinate and hated remnant, is the most vehement of all.[1] In that strange rhetorical tone of the later Code, the infuriated Emperor, after referring to the almost ostentatious contempt of pagans for "the thousand terrors of the laws," asks "why the springtime has resigned its wonted charm, why the summer with its scanty harvests mocks the hopes of the toiling husbandman, why the rigours of winter have condemned the fruitful soil to barrenness?" It must be the vengeance of Nature for continued impiety. The violated majesty of the Heavenly Power demanded expiation and revenge. Probably the timid devotees, who still clung to their rustic altars, found the explanation of these calamities in the impiety of the Emperor. But here, so far as open pagan ritual is concerned, the conflict with the Empire closes. The final triumph over the devotional attachments of a thousand years was reserved for the dialectic or the accommodating arts of the Church.

The secret of the long conflict is not to be sought exclusively in the obstinacy of immemorial custom, and the conservatism of a race wedded to ancient usage. The truth is, that in the period of transition the laws were administered for the most part by officials belonging to the pagan or wavering class. But, above all, the imperial government for a long time was only half-hearted in the war against the old religion of the State. The policy of Constantine and his successors, till the reign of Gratian, was, in spite of appearances, one of practical toleration to the legitimate practice of pagan

[1] *Nov. Theod.* tit. 3. The law is directed against Jews, Samaritans, heretics, and pagans.

worship in the West.[1] It is true that Constantius, Valentinian I., and Valens made the practice of the arts of divination, astrology, and magic a political crime,[2] and strove to repress them with a ruthless determination. But from 356 to 381 there is no law in the Code directed against public heathen rites. In the interval they were either authorised or connived at. Symmachus and his colleagues still hold the meetings of the pontifical college; the feasts of Magna Mater are still celebrated; the Vestals still guard the eternal fire. Even Gratian did not expressly abolish the heathen worship, although on his accession, for the first time, he declined to accept the pontifical robes, and withdrew from the sacred colleges their estates and endowments.[3] His most serious assault on the old religion was the removal of the statue and altar of Victory from the Senate-house.[4] The figure of Victory, originally brought from Tarentum, was regarded as the sacred symbol of Roman greatness. From the days of Augustus it had stood over the altar at which twelve generations of senators had seen their sittings opened with sacrifice, and at which they had sworn allegiance to the chief of the State.[5] The Senate which contained such attached pagans as Praetextatus, Symmachus, and Flavianus, and which almost certainly at this time had a majority opposed to the innovation,[6]

[1] Cf. Boissier, *La Fin du Pag.* ii. pp. 271, 296; Rauschen, *Jahrbücher der Christ. Kirche unter dem K. Theod.* p. 127, die Opfer dagegen, auch die blutigen, blieben im Westreiche bis zum Gesetz des Theodosius vom 24 Feb. 391 erlaubt: *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 10.

[2] There is a controversy as to the laws between 341 and 356, interdicting pagan worship. The most probable conclusion seems to be that, if they were issued, they were not rigorously enforced. Duruy, vii. 297; cf. Maury, *La Magie*, pp. 110-114.

[3] Zos. iv. 36, *τῶν οὖν ποντιφίκων κατὰ τὸ ξυνῆθες προσαγαγόντων Γρατιανῷ τὴν στολὴν ἀνεκείσατο τὴν ἀτιμίαν.* For doubts about this statement see Rauschen, *Jahrb. der Chr. K.* p. 120, n. 4.

[4] Sym. *Ep.* x. 3; cf. Seeck's *Sym.* liii. liv.

[5] Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*, i. 67.

[6] Cf. Seeck, *Sym.* liv.; cf. the account of the Senate's opposition to Theodosius in Zosimus, iv. 59; and on the other hand the boast of Prudentius, *c. Sym.* i. 566. Ambros. *Ep.* 17 affirms that the Christians

resolved to petition the Emperor to rescind the decrees. But the Christian party, through Damasus and Ambrose, succeeded in preventing the deputation from even getting an audience.[1] The events which immediately followed seemed a judgment of the gods on their enemies. Gratian fell by the assassin's hand, leaving no heirs; and a terrible famine wasted the provinces which were the granaries of Italy.[2] The pagan party took fresh courage, and in 384 their two greatest chiefs, Praetextatus and Symmachus, were raised, the one to the prefecture of Italy, the other to that of the city.[3] Praetextatus signalised his tenure by obtaining a decree for the prevention of the spoliation of temples,[4] and to require the restitution of works of art which had been abstracted by private persons. Once more the Senate formally resolved to petition the Emperor to repeal the law of Gratian. And Symmachus, as the head of the deputation, was entrusted with the task of stating their views. The speech which he composed for the occasion is still extant,[5] and is invaluable as the last formal and public protest of the proscribed faith. It is penetrated at once by the spirit of sceptical tolerance, and the spirit of old Roman conservatism. "Each nation," says Symmachus, "has its own gods and peculiar rites. The Great Mystery cannot be approached by one avenue alone.[6] But use and wont count for much in giving authority to a religion. Leave us the symbol on which our oaths of

were in a majority. But, if so, why did they not prevent the appeal to the Emperor? and why were even the Christian members of the Consistorium in favour of yielding? Cf. Rauschen, p. 119, n. 10, who deals in a rather arbitrary way with the evidence; cf. Boissier, ii. 315; Gibbon, c. 28.

[1] Ambros. *Ep.* 17, 10, misit ad me Sanctus Damasus . . libellum quem Christiani senatores dederunt, etc.

[2] Sym. *Rel.* 3, secuta est hoc factum fames publica.

[3] See the references to the *C. Th.* in Seeck, lv.

[4] Sym. *Rel.* 21.

[5] *Ib.* 3.

[6] Uno itinere non potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum; cf. a similar liberal tone in the letter of Maximus to S. Augustine, *Ep.* 16, § 4

allegiance have been sworn for so many generations. Leave us the system which has so long given prosperity to the State. A religion should be judged by its utility to the men who hold it. Years of famine have been the punishment of sacrilege. The treasury should not be replenished by the wealth of the sacred colleges, but by the spoils of the enemy." And the venerable form of Rome is introduced, in a piece of powerful rhetoric, pleading for reverence for her many centuries of life,[1] for leave to follow her immemorial customs and traditions, and the faith which had kept the Gauls and Hannibal at bay. According to S. Ambrose, the oratory of Symmachus had a powerful effect even on the Christian members of the Consistory.[2] Nor does the great bishop disguise his own admiration for its skill and power. But once more its arts and energy gained a victory for the Church.

Yet, in spite of intervals of imperial displeasure, Symmachus and his kinsman Flavianus continued to hold high place. Flavianus was Pretorian prefect in 391, and in the same year Symmachus rose to the consulship. Once again Symmachus was commissioned by the Senate to ask for the restoration of the altar of Victory. But Theodosius was thoroughly mastered by the powerful will of S. Ambrose, and the chief of the pagan party was hurried from the imperial presence, and set down at the hundredth milestone from Milan.[3] Another effort, and the last, was made in 392. The Consistory again would have yielded, but the young Valentinian stood firm, although this time S. Ambrose was absent from the field.

The law which definitely prohibited pagan worship in the West was published in the year of the consulship of

[1] Romam nunc putemus adsistere atque his vobiscum agere sermonibus . . . reveremini annos meos. . . .

[2] Ambros. *Ep.* 18, 2; *de Obit. Valent.* 19.

[3] Prosper, *de Promiss. et Praedict Dei*, iii. c. 38; S. Ambros. *Ep.* 51.

Symmachus.[1] Down to 391, notwithstanding the determined attitude of Gratian, the legitimate practice of the ancient rites in the Western provinces was little interfered with. But the law of Theodosius and Valentinian II. forbids absolutely the offering of sacrifices, and even the visiting of temples. Heavy fines are imposed on governors and officials of every degree who shall infringe the law, or connive at its infringement. The law of 392 is addressed to a prefect of the East, but it is evidently intended for the whole Roman world. It is of the most sweeping and uncompromising character.[2] No one, however highly placed in respect of birth, fortune, or office, is to presume to disobey it. The most private worship of the household gods, by incense, lights, or garlands, is interdicted.[3] And every other mode of heathen worship is forbidden in a long and exhaustive enumeration. All governors, defensors, and curials of cities are bound under heavy penalties to see to the observance of the law.

Yet the victory of the Church was not so secure as the confident tone of legislation might seem to proclaim. In the very year when the first of these laws was published a votary of Mithra within the walls of Rome received "the new birth to eternal life" through the cleansing rites of the Taurobolium.[4] Even more significant is the fact that many persons of rank and dignity were deserting the Christian fold, and lapsing into Jewish or Manichaean or pagan superstitions. There is no more remarkable chapter in the Code than that which deals with apostasy.[5] Constantine and Constantius had found it necessary to threaten severe penalties against

[1] *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 10.

[2] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 12, nullus omnino, ex quolibet genere, ordine hominum, dignitatum, vel in potestate positus, vel honore perfunctus, etc.

[3] Vel secretiore piaculo, Larem igne, mero Genium, Penates nidore veneratus, accendat lumina, imponat tura, serta suspendat.

[4] *C.I.L.* vi. 736, arcanis perfusionibus in aeternum renatus taurobolium criobolliumque fecit. The names of the consuls are made out to be those of 391, Tatianus and Symmachus.

[5] *C. Th.* xvi. tit. 7.

those who forsook Christianity to join the Jews or Manichaeans.[1] The law of the elder Theodosius in 381 is the first in the Code directed against the tendency of nominal Christians to relapse into heathenism.[2] Between 381 and 396 the Code contains six enactments, denouncing in tones of increasing severity those who have profaned their baptism and betrayed the faith of Christ by a return to idolatry, and withdrawing from them the rights of bequest or inheritance.[3] Apostates of rank and dignity are to be degraded and branded with perpetual infamy,[4] and all hope of restoration by penitence is refused to the renegade. Thirty years later, Valentinian III. thought it necessary to repeat the previous edicts, and even to add to their emphasis.[5]

That men should abandon the religion of the State in the face of such trenchant legislation is a proof, not only of the force of old religious associations, but also of a certain confidence that the cause of paganism was not yet hopeless. Nor was the confidence altogether unreasonable. The men who, in the foremost place and station, still clung obstinately to the faith of their ancestors, Symmachus, Flavianus, or Praetextatus, had seen the reign of Constantius. In their early youth they had beheld the Church torn by fierce conflicts, in which Christian charity and common humanity were forgotten in a controversy about what to them seemed barren verbal subtleties. They had seen the bishops of rival sects anathematising one another, and men of lofty character driven into poverty and obscure exile for years,

[1] *C. Th.* xvi. 8, 1 and 7; cf. xvi. 7, 3. See Godefroy's Paratitlon.

[2] *Ib.* xvi. 7, 1. See Godefroy's note on this law. Cf. Rauschen, *Jahrbücher der Chr. Kirche*, p. 153. He denies, apparently without sufficient grounds, the conclusions of Godefroy.

[3] *C. Th.* xvi. 7, 4, testamenti non habeant factionem; nulli in hereditate succedant; a nemine scribantur heredes.

[4] *Ib.* xvi. 7, 5, de loco statuque dejecti perpetua urantur infamia. Notice that this is addressed to the arch-pagan prefect, Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, in the consulship of his friend Symmachus.

[5] *Ib.* xvi. 7, 8.

while the military and administrative force of a government, nominally Christian, lent itself to satisfy the rancour of theological hatred. They might well feel, with the honest pagan Ammianus Marcellinus,[1] that no savage beasts could equal the cruelty of Christians to one another. On the other hand, their own religion, down to 391, had, in many respects, enjoyed practical toleration. Every one was still free to worship in his own fashion. There was no interference with conscience or the expression of opinion. Seven Christian emperors had accepted the pontifical robes on their accession.[2] In the year 356 Constantius, on his visit to Rome, had shown extraordinary interest in the religion of old Rome.[3] He had allotted priesthoods, and granted funds from the treasury for the sacred ceremonies. Attended by the Senate, he had gone the round of the ancient temples, and shown a sympathetic curiosity in their legends and antiquities. The pagan revival of Julian, brief and illusory as it was, may well have encouraged hopes of a more enduring restoration. When he granted universal toleration, recalled the martyrs of the Arian persecutions, and preached peace and goodwill to an assembly of bishops, he seemed to give paganism or Hellenism for the moment a position of moral superiority. Yet Julian himself discerned keenly the real weakness of paganism in the absence of a dogmatic system and moral discipline, and he strove to supply them.[4] Charity and the pastorate of souls must no longer be a monopoly of the Galileans. The priest was to instruct his people, instead of merely performing a part in theatrical ceremonies before the altar. The cruelties of the amphitheatre and the obscenities of the stage were no longer to be coun-

[1] Amm. Marc. xxii. 5, nullas infestas hominibus bestias ut sunt sibi ferales plerique Christianorum expertus; cf. xxi. 16, 18, for the historian's opinion of the theological disputes of the time.

[2] *Ib.* xvi. 10; Sym. *Ep.* x. 54.

[3] Sym. *Rel.* iii.

[4] Jul. *Ep.* 52; *Fragm. Ep.* in Hertlein's ed. i. pp. 387, 389, 391.

tenanced by true votaries of the Sun-god. A man who had lived through such a period, and who had, under Christian emperors, with impunity served as pontiff and been consecrated publicly in the Taurobolium, might well doubt whether the power, so often asserted and so constantly defied, was destined finally to triumph.

The murder of Valentinian II. by the hand or machinations of Arbogastes,[1] and the elevation of Eugenius to the purple, seemed for a moment to offer a chance of realising such dreams. Buried in his country seat, and professing to be satisfied with rural pleasures, Flavianus was really a man of great ambitions. In spite of his paganism, he was a favourite at the court, and rose to the highest offices. Yet under all his apparent epicurean indifference, or his study of imperial favour, Flavianus nursed, more than any of his contemporaries, the dream of restoring the religion and spirit of ancient Rome. We cannot help imagining him a man who suppressed, under a crust of half melancholy, half contemptuous pessimism, the fire of an energy which in earlier times might have done great service to the State. A fascinating charm, which disarmed theological antipathy, united to a burning hatred of the Christian *régime*, commanding ability combined with hopeless illusions, are probably the secret of his strange and tragic career. He threw himself into a movement which seemed for a moment to promise the chance of a real pagan reaction. Eugenius, a Christian in name, was a Hellenist in culture,[2] and readily sanctioned the repeal of the anti-pagan laws. At the instance of Flavianus,[3] the altar of Victory was once more restored to its place, the expenses of heathen rites were once more borne by the

[1] Zos. iv. 54; Socr. v. 25; Sozom. vii. 22. Cf. Rauschen, *Jahrbücher der Chr. Kirche*, pp. 362-363, for a discussion of the authorities.

[2] *Ib.* iv. 54; cf. Seeck's *Sym.* cxviii.; Sozom. vii. 22, Εὐγένιος δέ τις οὐχ ὑγιῶς διακείμενος περὶ τὸ δόγμα τῶν Χριστιανῶν.

[3] Paulin. *vit. Ambros.* § 26.

State, and all the curiosity of divination was allowed free play. Two years were spent in preparations for the conflict on which so much depended. On both sides the leaders strove to fortify the courage of their party by prophecy or oracle. Theodosius sent one of his eunuchs to consult a solitary of great age and famous sanctity in the depths of the Thebaid.[1] Flavianus was no less active in securing supernatural assurance of the success of his cause, and an oracle was circulated,[2] which seemed to predict the final overthrow of the Christian faith in the very year of the impending struggle. As consul of 394, he celebrated the festivals of Isis and Magna Mater under the eyes of the usurper.[3] The pagan party were full of hope and confidence. When Arbogastes and Eugenius quitted Milan to meet the army of Theodosius, they boasted that they would return to stable their horses in the Christian basilica.[4] Within a few days these hopes were crushed in the battle on the Frigidus. Flavianus by a voluntary death refused to witness the victory of the cause he hated, or to accept the probable clemency of the conqueror. The triumph of Christianity seemed complete and final. Serena, the wife of Stilicho,[5] one of the generals of Theodosius, in the presence of the last Vestal Virgin, took the necklace from the throat of the Great Mother, and placed it on her own. The sacrilege was, to pagan minds, within a few years terribly avenged.[6]

Even yet the pagan cause evidently did not seem to its adherents to be hopelessly lost. In spite of the defeat of Eugenius, the mass of the Senate were still obstinately attached to the faith "which had kept the city unravaged for a thousand years."[7] And one of the last acts of

[1] Claudian, *in Eutrop.* i. 312.
[2] Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, xviii. 53.
[3] Rufin. *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 33; *Carm. Paris.*; cf. Rauschen, *Jahrbücher*, p. 368
[4] Paulin. *vit. Ambros.* § 31.
[5] Zos. iv. 57.
[6] *Ib.* v. 38.
[7] *Ib.* iv. 59; but cf. Rauschen, p. 299, n. 4.

Theodosius was to convoke the conscript fathers and appeal to them to abandon their errors, and to accept the faith which promised absolution from all sin and impiety. According to Zosimus, the homily produced no effect, and the Emperor had even to listen to arguments in favour of the ancient religion of the State.[1]

In the year following the victory over Eugenius, Honorius and Arcadius found it necessary to repeat their father's prohibition of all heathen rites.[2] But the student may easily discover in this law the cause which made such constant iteration necessary. It is directed specially against governors of provinces and their officials, who condoned offences against previous edicts.[3] Neglect on the part of the inferior officers to carry out the Emperor's commands is now made a capital offence.[4] Theodosius had shown a similar distrust of his subordinates in the law of 392.[5] And it appears again and again in the legislation of this period. In the province of Africa the leaders of the Church complained of the slackness of the provincial officers in giving effect to the penal laws against paganism.[6] We may compare the difficulties of the Emperor in securing obedience to his laws against heathen rites with the apparently insuperable obstacles which the government had to encounter for a hundred and fifty years, in its efforts to purge the corruption of the financial service.[7] In both cases, the prohibitions are repeated with wearisome frequency, and pointed by threats of the severest punishment. But the Emperor was met by a dead weight of official resistance or negligence, which apparently rendered legislation almost nugatory. The provincial governor and his staff

[1] Zos. iv. 59, *μηδενὸς δὲ τῇ παρακλήσει πεισθέντος, κ.τ.λ.*

[2] *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 13.

[3] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 13, sciant autem moderatores provinciarum nostrarum et his apparitio obsecundans, etc.

[4] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 13, insuper capitali supplicio judicamus officia coercenda.

[5] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 12.

[6] Aug. *Ep.* 91, § 8; cf. 97.

[7] See book iii. c. 2 of this work.

were often in sympathy, or in league, with the offenders. A knowledge of the history and opinions of the official to whom the law is addressed will often explain the reason of the necessity for its repetition. For instance, the law of 391,[1] against the apostasy from the Christian faith of persons of high birth or official rank, is addressed to Flavianus, then Pretorian prefect, the man who, within three years, was to be a leader in the great pagan reaction under Eugenius. A law of 409[2] directed another Pretorian prefect, Jovius, to take the severest measures against those renegades who were adopting the superstition of the Heaven-worshippers. It may well be doubted whether Jovius, who, if he had any serious policy or faith, believed in the tolerant policy of Stilicho, and in astrology, was likely to display much zeal in enforcing the will of the Emperor against such heretics.

On the other hand, the pagan sentiment or the taste of many officials sometimes influenced the Government to restrain the fanatical Vandalism which, both in the East and the West, was making havoc of the temples and their treasures of art. It was probably the pagan author of the *Saturnalia* who evoked the edict of 399,[3] forbidding the destruction of such masterpieces in Spain and Gaul. In the years which followed the death of Theodosius, there is a marked effort to check the desecration of the ancient shrines by greed or fanaticism. S. Jerome and S. Augustine exult over the ruin of the temples of the false gods.[4] And there is no doubt that the destructive energy of men like Theophilus of Alexandria,[5] S. Martin of Tours, and Marcellus in Syria, had many imitators. But the

[1] *C. Th.* xvi. 7, 5.

[2] *Ib.* xvi. 8, 19. On these Coelicolae *v.* Godefroy's note, t. 6, p. 258.

[3] *Ib.* xv. 10, 15.

[4] Hieron. *Ep.* 107, § 1, auratum squalet Capitolium. Fuligine et aranearum telis omnia Romae templa cooperta sunt; Aug. *Ep.* 232, § 3, videtis certe simulacrorum templa partim sine reparatione collapsa, partim diruta, partim clausa, etc.; cf. Gregorovius, pp. 58-60.

[5] Sulp. Sev. *vit. S. Mart.* c. 13; Sozom. vii. 15; cf. Godefroy's note to *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 16.

emperors had no wish to see the demolition of costly and beautiful buildings.[1] They might still be used as places of public meeting and resort, or consecrated to Christian worship. The tumultuous gatherings, headed by monks, which wrought such deplorable havoc in the East, were prohibited by Arcadius;[2] and there is evidence that governors of taste and sentiment seconded the imperial will. The Christian poet Prudentius makes Theodosius recommend to the Senate the preservation of the temple marbles, as monuments of national greatness and masterpieces of art.[3] In the reign of the younger Theodosius nearly 300 temples of the gods were still standing, although their ornaments and plates of gold had been torn off to swell the ransom demanded by Alaric. Many works of art were buried and forgotten, in the terrors of persecution or invasion.[4] But in the time of Honorius, and even in that of Justinian, immense numbers of them were still preserved, both in the open spaces of the city and in the halls of the nobles.[5]

From the death of Theodosius till 408, although the religious conflict was fierce, it was controlled to some extent by the moderating influence of Stilicho. It is not our purpose to disentangle the perplexed story of those puzzling and disastrous years. On the one side were the bishops, backed by some of the great nobles and the officers, Roman or barbarian, of the elder Theodosius, the party which had already won a great, though not yet decisive victory. On the other was the mass of the senatorial class, with a crowd of Arians, Jews, Manichaeans, and philosophic freethinkers, who, though divided in

[1] *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 15, volumus publicorum operum ornamenta servari; cf. xvi. 10, 3.

[2] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 16.

[3] *Contra Sym.* i. 501. Inscriptions show that in 483 statues of Minerva were restored by the Urban prefect. *C.I.L.* vi. 526, 1664.

[4] Gregorovius, i. 78, n. 3.

[5] In the time of Justinian, 3785 statues remained in the city. Gregorov. i. 79; cf. *Notitia Occid.* c. iv. The curator statuarum was an officer under the Praef. Urb.; see Böcking's ed. p. 201.

religious belief, were united by old patriotic associations, or by the hatred of a menacing theocracy. Stilicho, who was left guardian of the young emperors, was, or gave himself out to be, the depositary of the last wishes of Theodosius on the religious problem of the time. He interpreted his commission to be one of toleration,[1] to hold the balance even between the opposing factions. In the year 395 an amnesty was proclaimed,[2] and the brand of ignominy, attached to the party of Eugenius, was obliterated. Ancient pagan festivals in Africa received legal sanction.[3] The judicial power of the episcopate was limited,[4] and the Senate, which was the stronghold of pagan sentiment, was accorded an authority which it had not enjoyed for many ages. Yet the anti-pagan laws still in theory retained their force, and the crowd of pagans and heretics were, at least nominally, kept in bounds.[5] Amid the fury of party feeling and fanaticism, the cool, and probably sceptical, statesman succeeded in satisfying neither Christian nor pagan, and was finally execrated by both alike.[6] The ominous advent of Alaric and Radagaisus stimulated still further the war of religions. Then began that melancholy strife of sophistry, as to the efficacy of the old gods or the new to protect and prosper their worshippers, which was only closed by the genius of S. Augustine. Every fluctuation of fortune was eagerly seized upon, and skilfully used, to discredit or to glorify Jupiter or Christ. What we are chiefly concerned to notice is the force and fervour of pagan sentiment at this time. Never in the early days of Rome was superstition apparently more rampant. At the first tidings of the coming of the Gothic hosts, all the old omens of the days of the Samnite and Carthaginian wars reappear.

[1] Ambros. *de Obit. Theod.* 5.
[2] *C. Th.* xv. 14, 12.
[3] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 17. Cf. Godefroy's note.
[4] *Ib.* xvi. 11, 1; cf. xvi. 2, 12, 23, 41.
[5] *Ib.* xvi. 5, 37, 38, 39.
[6] Rutil. Namat. ii. 41; Oros. vii. 38; cf. Rauschen, *Jahrbücher der Christ. Kirche*, p. 558.

The terror of the time can still be felt thrilling in the verses of Claudian. Men talked of dreams, of strange flights of birds, of comets and eclipses, of showers of stones, and unearthly sounds in the silence of the night.[1] They watched the settling of swarms of bees, and turned the leaves of the Sibylline books of fate.[2] They recalled the flight of the twelve vultures which had crossed the gaze of Romulus, and, in defiance of chronology, abridged the years portended by their flight.[3] When Radagaisus with his host of 200,000 Goths descended from the Alps, the old pagan feeling defied all restraint, and the cries of its panic and regret reached the ears of the Bishop of Hippo.[4] The most terrible invader who had ever appeared in Italy, men said, was a diligent votary of his strange northern gods; and the sons of old Rome were deprived of the help of their ancient deities, to whom they were now forbidden to offer a grain of incense. Meanwhile the feeling of suspicion towards Stilicho was deepening into hatred on the Christian side. The clergy did not find in him the facile instrument of persecution that they desired. They exalted the piety and virtues of the weak and worthless Honorius at the expense of the man without whose guidance Honorius was a mere cipher.[5] They circulated the myth, which was accepted also by the pagan Rutilius,[6] that Stilicho had let loose the hordes of barbarism on the Empire, with the deep purpose of re-establishing the pagan religion, and that his son Eucherius

[1] Claud. *de Bell. Get.* 227-247.

[2] *Ib.* 231:

quid carmine poscat
fatidico custos Romani carbasus aevi.

[3] *Ib.* 265:

tunc reputant annos, interceptoque volatu
vulturis, incidunt properatis saecula metis.

[4] Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, v. 23, nobis apud Karthaginem dicebatur, hoc credere, spargere, jactare paganos, quod ille diis amicis protegentibus et opitulantibus, quibus immolare cotidie ferebatur, vinci omnino non posset ab eis, qui talia diis Romanis sacra non facerent nec fieri a quoquam permitterent.

[5] Aug. *Ep.* 97; Hieron. *Ep.* 123, § 17, quod non vitio principum, qui vel religiosissimi sunt, sed scelere semibarbari accidit proditoris; Oros. vii. 37, 11.

[6] Rutil. Namat. ii. 46.

was to be the Julian of another religious reaction.[1] The great general and statesman was charged with slackness and perfidy in his campaigns against Alaric.[2] The victory at Pollentia was attributed to supernatural aid, in spite of the sacrilegious violation of the holy time of Easter. With reckless inconsistency the men who lauded the Christian clemency and reverence of Alaric, vilified Stilicho's policy of conciliation as treachery and weakness.[3] On the other hand, the old Roman party still more heartily detested the man who had borne a part in the victory over Eugenius,[4] and who relied on those German captains and soldiers who were now the main defence of Rome. The ignoble triumph of the motley combination which overwhelmed Stilicho has been often told, and need not be repeated here. The hypocritical Olympius,[5] who owed his first rise to Stilicho, attained a brief ascendency, amid the blessings and congratulations of the dignitaries of the Church.[6] And the Church took an ample revenge for the interval of clemency. The last endowments of the old religion were withdrawn,[7] the images of the gods were pulled down, the temples were either confiscated or destroyed, the banquets and games were prohibited. All enemies of the Catholic faith were banished from the imperial service.[8] The feigned enthusiasm of Olympius obtained for the bishops that civil jurisdiction which had been strictly limited by Stilicho.[9] And, to ensure the victory, the bishops themselves were

[1] Oros. vii. 38, § 1.

[2] *Ib.* vii. 37, 2, taceo de Alarico rege cum Gothis suis saepe victo, saepe concluso semperque dimisso.

[3] *Ib.* vii. 39; *de Civ. Dei*, i. 1.

[4] Zos. iv. 57, 59; Rutil. Namat. ii. 41.

[5] Zos. v. 32, ἐν δὲ τῇ φαινομένῃ τῶν Χριστιανῶν εὐλαβείᾳ πολλὴν ἀποκρύπτων ἐν ἑαυτῷ πονηρίαν.—Cf. Olympiod. § 2, μιαιφόνῳ καὶ ἀπανθρώπῳ σπουδῇ Ὀλυμπίου ὃν αὐτὸς τῷ βασιλεῖ προσφκείωσε τὸν διὰ ξίφους ὑπέμεινε θάνατον.

[6] Aug. *Ep.* 96, temporali vero felicitate ad aeterna lucra te prudenter usurum minime dubitamus. Written in 408 to Olympius.

[7] *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 19.

[8] *Ib.* xvi. 5, 42. This mischievous enactment, which deprived Rome of the services of some of her best soldiers, is referred to in Zos. v. 46. It was issued within three months after the death of Stilicho.

[9] *Ib.* xvi. 10, 19; xvi. 2, 39.

charged with the congenial duty of enforcing the laws, which the milder or less conscientious lay-governor had often allowed to sleep.[1]

Another short-lived and impotent pagan reaction occurred in 409, when Alaric, with the approval of the Senate, set up a rival emperor to Honorius in the person of the dilettante Attalus.[2] The leading members of this government belonged to the pagan party. Lampadius, the Pretorian prefect, was an avowed believer in divination and its kindred arts, and had been honoured with a letter from S. Augustine on the subject of this superstition.[3] Marcian, the prefect of the city, had, during the brief ascendency of Eugenius, been guilty of apostasy.[4] Tertullus, the consul of 410, was a declared pagan of the old school, who did not hesitate, in addressing the Senate, to express a hope that the ancient pontificate would be revived in himself.[5] The treacherous or fickle Jovius, whom Attalus raised to the prefecture,[6] was a free-thinker of the type common in those days of fluid convictions.[7] Under such patronage, the Chaldaean fortune-tellers and diviners, who had been banished by so many emperors, renewed their activity.[8] For the first time since the days of Constantine, the *Labarum* disappeared from the

[1] The African bishops in October of 408 sent a deputation to demand the enforcement of the laws against pagans and heretics, and S. Augustine backed up their demands by a private letter to Olympius (*Ep.* 97). At the same time the pagans, on the death of Stilicho, clamoured for the repeal of these laws, on the ground that they had emanated from Stilicho. That they were not vigorously enforced during Stilicho's ascendency seems implied in the words: omnia quae in Donatistas, Manichaeos, sive Priscillianistas, vel in Gentiles a nobis decreta sunt non solum manere decernimus, verum in executionem plenissimam effectumque deduci (*C. Th.* xvi. 5, 43). Stilicho's death took place 10 Kal. Sep. 408; the laws excluding pagans from the army, and enforcing penalties against heretics, are dated 18 and 17 Kal. Dec. 408. See Godefroy's note to *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 19.

[2] Zos. vi. 7.

[3] Aug. *Ep.* 246.

[4] He was procos. of Africa in 394. See *Carm. Paris.* 78, quoted by Seeck, *Sym.* n. 588.

[5] Oros. vii. 42.

[6] Zos. vi. 8.

[7] Paulin. Nol. *Ep.* 16.

[8] Sozom. ix. 8, *μάντεσι δέ τισιν ἐναχθεὶς, οὕτε Ἀλαριχῷ ἐπείσθη*

coins.[1] Attalus, in a speech of ornate rhetoric,[2] charmed the Senate with the picture of a reunited empire of both East and West, and held out the hope of a speedy restoration of the festivals and temple services of their ancestors. It was the last attempt of the old pagan spirit to assert itself openly in the Empire of the West. It was made with the support of a German and Arian chief. Attalus had, in deference to Alaric, received baptism at the hands of Sighe-Sar, an Arian bishop.[3] Yet he was for the moment the head of a party, some of whom dreamed of a return to the tolerant policy of Constantine or of Valentinian I., with the support of the Gothic power; while others may have even nursed the hope that the hated faith was already doomed. Attalus was a worthy representative of such illusions. And the great chief, who had been his sole stay, was within a few months laid to rest in the secret grave in the bed of the Busentus.[4]

With Stilicho probably fell his friend and brilliant eulogist, the poet Claudian. He had, beyond a doubt, a high place in that society, of which he is the sole literary glory. Yet it is curious that, about the history of the last man of letters, who has something of the manner and inspiration of the great age, so little is known. He had, in his days of prosperity, assailed in a biting epigram[5] the cupidity of an Egyptian compatriot, who rose high in the imperial service, and became Pretorian prefect after Stilicho's death.[6] We can only conjecture the fate of the poet, from an epistle addressed to this dignitary,[7] imploring his mercy by an appeal to the examples of pity consecrated in Grecian legend. Claudian's great crime was that, in the words of Orosius, he was "a most obstinate

[1] Eckhel, *Doctr. Num.* (quoted in Thierry's *Alaric*, p. 413).

[2] Zos. vi. 7; Sozom. ix. 8 and 9.

[3] Sozom. ix. 9.

[4] Jordan. *de Reb. Get.* 30.

[5] Claud. *Epigr.* 30:
insomnis Pharius sacra, profana rapit.

[6] *C. Th.* xv. 14, 13. Cf. Seeck's *Sym.* clxxxvi. n. 944; Teuffel, ii. 440, § 6.

[7] *Ep.* 1.

pagan." What his religious convictions really were we can never know. Probably his deepest religious attachment was to *Roma dea*, the "mother of arts and arms," who has gathered the vanquished into her bosom, who has given her citizenship to the world, whose dominion shall have no end.[1] Born on the banks of the Nile,[2] he was yet a Roman of the Romans, and had a mingled hatred and contempt for the new Rome on the Bosphorus, with its mushroom and effeminate civilisation.[3] The *verve* of Juvenal reappears in his bitter raillery of the eunuch minister of the Eastern Empire, and of the cringing servility of the Byzantine nobles.[4] It is little wonder that Claudian was the favourite of the Roman Senate,[5] still pagan to the core, and profoundly jealous of the Eastern capital. His powers were lavished on the achievements of Stilicho, whose policy was to humour the Senate by a politic deference to its antiquated prerogatives. Serena, Stilicho's wife, was his great friend and patroness,[6] and is said to have arranged a wealthy match for the poet. On all this circle he expends the traditional ornament of Greek and Roman mythology. Nor does he hesitate to do the same for the Christian princes, Theodosius and Honorius, who were pledged to the extirpation of Paganism. There is hardly a hint in Claudian that the Roman world has officially adopted a faith hostile to all his pagan dreams. He appears placidly unconscious of the great revolution, and recalls Honorius to the Penates of the Palatine,[7] as if Rome was still the Rome of Augustus.

A few years after the eclipse of Claudian, we have a

[1] Oros. vii. 35, 21, poeta eximius sed paganus pervicasissimus; Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, v. 26; Gesner's Prol. to Claud. v.; Rauschen, *Jahrbücher der Christ. Kirche*, pp. 555-9; cf. Claud. *de Cons. Stil.* iii. 136-160; *de Bell. Get.* 50 *sqq.*

[2] Claud. *ad Gennad.* 3, et nostro cognite Nilo; cf. *Ep.* 1, 56.

[3] Claud. *in Eutrop.* ii. 326-341.

[4] *Ib.* ii. 137.

[5] See an inscription dedicated praegloriosissimo poetarum — petente Senatu, *C.I.L.* vi. 1710.

[6] Claud. *Ep.* 2.

[7] Ib. *de VI^to Cons. Honor.* 407.

glimpse for a moment of another pagan man of letters, who is now little known, but who is the last genuine representative of the old pagan tone in literature. Rutilius Namatianus was one of the Gallic aristocracy who had remained untouched by the great Christian enthusiasm aroused by S. Martin. His father[1] had held high imperial office, and he himself[2] had been Urban prefect in 414,[3] only six years after the trenchant law had been published, which condemned to final ruin the temples and images of the old gods. He had lived in intimate friendship with the greatest Roman nobles; and the fragment of his poem which we possess comes to us as a solitary revelation of their deeper feelings. It is the tale of his homeward voyage to Gaul in the year 416,[4] when he was reluctantly compelled, by the ravages which his paternal estates had suffered from the invaders,[5] to leave the city, to whose gilded fanes he looks back with religious veneration and patriotic regret.

The poem has great interest from a purely literary point of view. But we are at present concerned only with the author's attitude to the opposing creeds. Brief and fragmentary as it is, it discloses more of the inner pagan sentiment of the aristocratic class than the much more voluminous poetry of Claudian. Claudian's paganism is more purely literary; it has the air of an unchallenged supremacy. He writes as if he belonged to the age of Virgil, as if Christianity had never existed. On the religious conflict of his time he shows the calm reticence of Symmachus or Macrobius. He is either too full of Roman pride to recognise the new faith, or too cultivated

[1] Rutil. Namat. i. 595; cf. 575 *sqq.* He had been consularis Tusciae, and Praef. Urb. (*C. Th.* vi. 26, 8).

[2] *Ib.* i. 157, 473.

[3] *Ib.* i. 157-160, 473; cf. *C. Th.* xiii. 5, 38, which is addressed to Albinus, Praef. Urb. in 416.

[4] This is inferred from Rutil. Namat. i. 135:

quamvis sedecies denis et mille peractis
annus praeterea jam tibi nonus eat

(*i.e.* 1169 A.U.C.). The capture of Toulouse is mentioned in i. 496.

[5] Rutil. Namat. i. 25:

praesentes lacrimas tectis debemus avitis.

to hate it. Rutilius is a man of different mould. He lets us see plainly the working of his own mind on religious subjects, and the feelings of his class towards those who rejected the old religion of their country. That such a poem should have been published under the Christian empire, and that its author should have held the highest office, is a startling proof of the persistence of the old Roman practical toleration of freedom of thought.

Rutilius is faithful to the old religion, but he is not its slave.[1] Sometimes he will uphold the literal truth of a myth. Sometimes he will use the language of Euhemerism or Deism. He displays in fact that mixture of scepticism and credulity, of conformity and free thought, which characterised the cultivated pagan for many ages before his time. But there is no hesitation in the tone in which he speaks of the enemies of Paganism. In some scathing lines,[2] he gives vent to the concentrated hatred which was felt by his caste for the memory of Stilicho. The impious traitor, who burnt the Sibylline books and, for his own selfish ends, laid open the hearth and citadel of the Empire to the tribes of the North, is consigned to the lowest depths of Tartarus. Nothing could surpass the almost brutal contempt which Rutilius feels for the Jews,[3] with one of whom he had an encounter in his wanderings; for their obscene rite of initiation, for the listless sloth of their Sabbath, spent in commemoration of a God who was weary of his work of creation.[4] But when he speaks of "the conquered race that crushes its conquerors,"[5] there can be little doubt that he has in view the religion which was crushing out his own. The islands of the Tuscan Sea, which he passed in his voyage,

[1] Rutil. Namat. i. 255; cf. i. 73.

[2] *Ib.* ii. 41.

[3] *Ib.* i. 384-398:
humanis animal dissociale cibis.

[4] *Ib.*:
septima quaeque dies turpi damnata veterno,
tamquam lassati mollis imago Dei.

[5] *Ib.* v. 398:
victoresque suos natio victa premit.

swarmed with monkish exiles,[1] who had forsaken family and public duty for a life of prayer and solitary asceticism. The monks in those days were hardly judged even by their own co-religionists. At the funeral of Blaesilla,[2] the daughter of a great Roman house, who had withdrawn from the world and was believed to have shortened her life by her austerities, the mob of Rome broke into shouts of execration against what they regarded as an inhuman fanaticism. The aversion to the ascetic life, felt by the cultivated man of the world, is expressed in more urbane form by Ausonius in his letters of expostulation to S. Paulinus. But that feeling probably never found more pointed utterance than in the lines of Rutilius on the hermits of Capraria. In the eyes of the pagan noble and Roman patriot, they are wretches who wish to screen themselves from too observant eyes, who make themselves miserable to avoid misery, who, while they flee from the ills of life, are incapable of enjoying its blessings.[3] Rutilius had little conception of the force and destiny of the movement which he derided.

In the practice of those arts which professed to control nature and to forecast the future, in the excitement or obscenity of the theatre and the circus, the heathen spirit found a shelter long after its public ritual had ceased.

The belief in the arts of magic, divination, and astrology was probably the most living and energetic force in the pagan sentiment of the time. These practices had always been suspected by Roman statesmen.[4] The cultivation of them was condemned under the severest

[1] Rutil. Namat. i. 440:

jam se Capraria tollit.
squalet lucifugis insula plena viris.

quaenam perversi rabies tam stulta cerebri,
dum mala formides nec bona posse pati.

[2] Hieron. *Ep.* 39, § 5, dolet (mater) filiam jejuniis interfectam. . . . Quousque genus detestabile Monachorum non urbe pellitur? Cf. the reference (518) to a friend who has become a recluse, "perditus hic vivo funere civis erat."

[3] Rutil. Namat. 445:

[4] See Maury's *La Magie*, p. 70 *sqq.*

penalties by the legislation of the fourth and fifth centuries.[1] Yet it was never really suppressed, and, in its strange terrors and seductions, it perpetuated the power of heathenism far into the Christian ages.[2] Its fascination, both over the cultivated class and the vulgar, was never more powerful than in the first decade of the fifth century. There is no more singular episode, in that time of unstable beliefs and uncertain party lines, than that in the year 408, when some Tuscan adepts in the secret arts offered their services to Pompeianus, prefect of Rome, to save the city from the Goths.[3] They told the prefect how, a short time before, they had by their spells called down the lightning,[4] and driven the Goths away from the walls of a beleaguered town. The prefect consulted the pontifical books, and was evidently inclined to try the effect of the ancient arts. But the practice of them was sternly prohibited,[5] and a recent law had laid a special responsibility on the higher magistrates, and on the bishops, to enforce the prohibition. Pompeianus in his difficulty sought the advice of Innocent, Bishop of Rome. This great pontiff, who was also a great patriot,[6] did not see fit to oppose his own opinion to the wishes of the people at such a crisis, but he stipulated that the magic rites should be performed secretly. The Tuscans, however, insisted that the ritual would only be efficacious if publicly performed on the Capitol and in the open spaces of the city, in the presence of the Senate. It has been suggested that Innocent, foreseeing this, gave his consent under a legally impossible condition, to save the Christian cause from an outburst of popular hatred. How the matter ended is uncertain. The Christian historian says

[1] *C. Th.* ix. tit. 16.

[2] Maury, pt. i. c. 7.

[3] Zos. v. 41.

[4] *Ib.* v. 41; Sozom. ix. 6. The name of the place appears variously as Nevola, Larnia, and, by conjecture, Narnia.

[5] *C. Th.* ix. 16, 3, 5.

[6] ὁ δὲ τὴν τῆς πόλεως σωτηρίαν ἐμπροσθεν τῆς ιδιωτικῆς ποιησάμενος δόξης λάθρᾳ ἐφήκεν αὐτοῖς ποιεῖν ἅπερ ἤθελον. Zos. l.c.

that the rites were performed, but that they proved unavailing.[1] The pagan Zosimus affirms that the aid of the Tuscans was declined. In any case, the incident reveals the persistent force of pagan superstition.

The proposal of Pompeianus was a gross violation of many laws, from the time of Constantine.[2] The consultation of a seer, diviner, or any professor of the magic art, was made by Constantius an offence punishable by death.[3] A similar penalty was denounced against the tribe of Eastern fortune-tellers by Valentinian and Valens,[4] and, in spite of the general toleration of heathen worship which characterised the rule of these Emperors, a ruthless war was waged with the secret arts, which were suspected as lending themselves to conspiracy against the Emperor.[5] One law especially of that time, relating to offenders of the senatorial class,[6] reveals what was probably a real political danger. The persecution to which philosophers and professors of Hellenism were subjected in the reign of Valens may have had some connection with the later Neoplatonic cultivation of magic and dark superstitions.[7] The earlier Alexandrines condemned the magic arts.[8] But it is well known that, in the later stages of Neoplatonism, the power to wield the forces of nature, and to predict the future, was more and more openly claimed. Fasting, prayer, and mystical elation were thought to bring the votary into communication with the supernatural powers. The influence of the stars on the fortunes of human life, which was denied by

[1] Sozom. ix. 6; cf. Zos. v. 41.

[2] *C. Th.* ix. 16, 1 and 2. Constantine, however, permitted *public* sacrifices of divination; qui vero id vobis existimatis conducere, adite aras publicas atque delubra.

[3] *Ib.* ix. 16, 4, sileat omnibus perpetuo divinandi curiositas. Etenim supplicium capitis feret gladio ultore prostratus, etc.

[4] *Ib.* ix. 16, 8.

[5] Amm. Marc. xxvi. 3. Zos. iv. 13 gives an idea of the grounds of the Emperor's suspicion of these practices.

[6] *C. Th.* ix. 16, 10, "de Senatoribus maleficii reis."

[7] Maury, *La Magie*, p. 121.

[8] Vacherot, *L'École d'Alexandrie*, ii. p. 115, where the opinions of Porphyry are set forth; cf. ii. 147.

Plotinus, became an article of faith with many of his successors.[1] In the hands of Maximus and Chrysanthius, and the men who surrounded Julian, Neoplatonism lost its philosophic purity and elevation,[2] and tended more and more to absorb the more materialistic conceptions of paganism.[3] The theurgic virtues, miracle and magic, overshadowed the detached and lofty idealism of the earlier Alexandrines. S. Augustine,[4] with his keen practical sense, strikes at this degraded Platonism as the very heart of the heathen position, and particularly at its doctrine of daemons, which was the foundation of the belief in incantations and magic. The daemons were the powers acting as mediators between the gods, who dwell apart in the highest heaven, and mortal men.[5] Along with certain divine qualities, the daemons have all the passions of humanity;[6] they are irritated by neglect, or soothed and propitiated by gifts and sacrificial rites.[7] From them comes the knowledge of the future by augury and dreams, and the power to command the elements, by occult arts, songs, incantations, and potions. The noteworthy thing is that, in condemning this baleful superstition, the Christian often showed that he had quite as much faith in daemonic

[1] Macrob. *Somn. Scip.* i. 19, 27, et Plotinus . . . pronunciat nihil vi vel potestate eorum hominibus evenire.

[2] Vacherot, ii. 145, where the logical development of the belief in magic arts, etc., is traced from the fundamental principles of the school; Plotinus and Porphyry recoiled from these consequences. But the doctrine of the universe, as a "sympathetic whole" bound together by affinities, inevitably led to theurgy on the one hand and magic on the other (Vach. ii. 147).

[3] *Ib.* ii. 148; cf. Eunap. *vit. Iamblich.* p. 13 (Boissonade's ed.), where Iamblichus is said to have risen 10 cubits from the earth during prayer (cf. p. 15). In the life of Maximus, an image of Hecate breaks into smiles under the influence of incantation (p. 51).

[4] *De Civ. Dei*, viii. 14 *sqq.*

[5] Vacherot, ii. 127; Maury, *La Magie*, p. 87.

[6] *De Civ. Dei*, viii. 14, habent enim cum diis communem immortalitatem corporum, animorum autem cum hominibus passiones.

[7] *Ib.* viii. 16, dicit (Platonicus) ad eos pertinere divinationes augurum, aruspicum, vatum atque somniorum, ab his quoque esse miracula magorum.

powers as the pagan had.[1] Constantius threatens with death those who dare to disturb the elements, or to call forth the spirits of the dead by magic spells.[2] S. Augustine regarded these beings as spirits banished from heaven for unpardonable sin, who, by diabolic deceit, had persuaded men to give them divine honours.[3]

The law of 409, ordering the expulsion of the Mathematici from Rome, and all cities of Italy, was probably suggested by Pope Innocent,[4] to prevent a repetition of that painful scene of superstitious observance at which he may have had to connive. But the threats of Honorius,[5] while they may have driven many of the crowd of diviners and sorcerers into remote country places, utterly failed to extinguish the superstition, and men even in high station long continued to practise the forbidden rites with impunity. The leading members of the government, established by the order of Alaric, were devoted to the black arts. Attalus, the new Emperor, was ready to accept a nominal Christianity; but he belonged to the crowd of sceptics, whose only real faith was in Hellenism and astrology or magic. When Alaric wished to send troops over to Africa in order to crush Heraclian, the adherent of Honorius, Attalus relied more on the promises of diviners,[6] who told him that he could become master of Africa without a conflict, than on the counsels of a serious statesmanship. Lampadius, the Pretorian prefect in this singular government, was, as we have seen, the friend and correspondent

[1] Maury, p. 99; Friedländer, iii. p. 458. The Christian doctors were only following the Hebraic tradition on this subject.

[2] *C. Th.* ix. 16, 5, multi magicis artibus ausi elementa turbare, vitas insontium labefactare non dubitant, etc.

[3] *De Civ. Dei*, viii. 22, quia de caeli superioris sublimitate dejecti merito inregressibilis transgressionis in hoc sibi congruo velut carcere praedamnati sunt.

[4] *Ib.* ix. 16, 12; Zos. v. 41.

[5] *C. Th.* ix. 16, 12, non solum urbe Roma, sed etiam omnibus civitatibus pelli decernimus.

[6] Zos. vi. 7, ταῖς δὲ ἐπὶ τοῖς μάντεσιν ἐλπίσιν ἑαυτὸν ἐκδιδοὺς καὶ ἀμαχητὶ περιποιήσεσθαι Καρχηδόνα καὶ τὰ περὶ Λιβύην ἅπαντα πεπεισμένος, κ.τ.λ. Sozom. ix. 8.

of S. Augustine, who laboured to convert him from his belief in astrology.[1] The mass of the Roman aristocracy, with the illustrious exception of the great Christian house of the Anicii,[2] rejoiced in the advent to power of this strange alliance of Arian Christianity, dilettante Hellenic culture, and Chaldaean superstition. Doubtless, as we shall see in a later page, there was a purer and more respectable element in the force of the last pagan reaction. There was a real patriotic feeling, a real religious devotion, and a philosophic theology, which, however arid and, to our minds, uninspiring, yet enabled the nobler sort to maintain their hold on the faith of the past, while they put out of sight its grosser elements. But the baser form of ancient superstition was probably the most tenacious and energetic. No penal legislation could eradicate the belief, held alike by the most educated and the most ignorant, that there was a lore which could control the operations of nature, and compel the future to unveil its secrets. In the very year when the last of the anti-pagan laws was published, Litorius, the lieutenant of Actius, in his conflict with the Visigoths, was led to his destruction under the walls of Toulouse by trusting (to use the words of the Chronicle) "in the responses of seers and the monitions of daemons."[3] Only a year or two before the fall of the Western Empire,[4] Lampridius, an accomplished man of letters at Bordeaux, and one of the most admired and trusted friends of Sidonius, the bishop of Auvergne, consulted a troop of African sorcerers as to the hour of his death.

In the cruel sports of the arena and the impurities of the stage the Christian Fathers for ages recognised that paganism had its strongest and most enduring hold on the people. S. Cyprian said that "idolatry was the

[1] Aug. *Ep.* 146.

[2] Zos. vi. 7.

[3] Prosp. *Chron.* ad a. 439, dum aruspicum responsis et daemonum significationibus fidit, pugnam cum Gothis imprudenter conseruit, etc.

[4] Sid. *Ep.* viii. 11.

mother of games." Diana presided over the hunting scenes, the god of war was the patron of the gladiatorial combats.[1] When the bloody strife had closed, a figure, representing the powers of the under world, gave the finishing stroke to the wretches who were still lingering. The Romans, under the most Christian Emperors Theodosius and Honorius, were still gloating over spectacles which their ancestors established to do honour to the *manes* of departed relatives.[2] The amphitheatre gave a sort of consecration to the old savage instinct for cruelty, as the theatre gratified the pruriency of low desires. It is difficult for us to conceive the fascination which those awful holocausts of human life exercised, not only on characters hardened by voluptuousness, but on the cultivated and humane.[3] A philosophic friend of S. Augustine,[4] who was half inclined to be a Christian, and who on principle detested such spectacles, once allowed himself to be drawn into the fatal circle. At first he resolved to close his eyes to the ghastly horrors of the scene. Presently, at the applause raised by some crisis in the conflict, his eyes opened and would not be withdrawn. The fumes of the carnage seemed to intoxicate his senses; he lost his identity, and became one of the bloodthirsty crowd. He went away eager to return.

Men can find a justification for any established institution, and these cruel displays were defended, even by good and eminent men,[5] as the virile amusements of a warlike race, accustoming it to make light of death. No such defence was possible in the last years of the Empire, when the Roman army was recruited and officered by

[1] Tertull. *de Spectaculis*, 9, 10; *Apol.* 15, 12; cf. Friedländer, ii. p. 216.

[2] Suet. *Jul.* 26; Valer. Max. ii. 4, 7; Liv. *Epit.* 16.

[3] Plin. *Panegyr. Traj.* 33, visum est spectaculum inde non enerve nec fluxum, nec quod animos virorum molliret et frangeret, sed quod ad pulcra volnera contemptumque mortis accenderet.

[4] Aug. *Conf.* vi. 8.

[5] Plin. *Traj.* 33; Cic. *Tusc.* ii. 17, § 41.

Germans; and when Romans would mutilate themselves,[1] and bury themselves in any retreat to escape military service.[2] Yet this nerveless and effeminate mob had been indulged by successive emperors with these revolting atrocities. Even the greatest and best princes had to satisfy the cravings of a proletariat, which probably had more of "the ape and tiger" than any that ever existed. Trajan, with the approval of the humane Pliny, had, after his Dacian victories, sent down 10,000 gladiators into the arena.[3] M. Aurelius, in the performance of social duty, gave gladiatorial shows himself,[4] and attended them, though in a perfunctory and reluctant fashion. But the people were offended when he turned away to read or pen despatches in the amphitheatre; and when he enrolled the gladiators for the Marcomannic war,[5] men said, with a sneer, that he had diminished the pleasures of the people in order to convert them to philosophy. The Emperor Constantine, in the year of the Council of Nicæa, restrained, by an ambiguous edict,[6] this cruel amusement in the Eastern Empire. But in the West it went on almost unchecked. Valentinian, indeed, forbade Christians to be condemned to the gladiatorial school as a punishment for crime.[7] And, in 367, members of the Palatine service were also exempted from this fate.[8] But the elder Theodosius did not abolish the inhuman spectacle,[9] when he interdicted the peaceful worship of the pagan temples. In the last years of the fourth century[10] Symmachus had, at great

[1] *C. Th.* vii. 13, 10, "de Murcis"; cf. Amm. Marc. xv. 12, 3.

[2] *C. Th.* vii. tit. 18 *passim*.

[3] Dion Cass. lxviii. c. 15, καὶ μονομάχους μύριοι ἤγωνίσαντο.

[4] Capitolin. *M. Ant.* 6; cf. Capitolin. *Ant. P.* c. 12; Vop. *Aurel.* c. 33.

[5] *M. Ant.* 23, quod populum sublatis voluptatibus vellet cogere ad philosophiam.

[6] *C. Th.* xv. 12, 1, cruenta spectacula in otio civili et domestica quiete non placent.

[7] *Ib.* ix. 40, 8.

[8] *Ib.* ix. 40, 11; cf. xv. 12, 2.

[9] See Godefroy's refutation of Baronius on this subject, in the note to xv. 12, 1.

[10] On the date, see Seeck's *Sym.* lxxii. The games did not take place till 401.

trouble and expense,[1] arranged for a gladiatorial combat at the games which were to celebrate his son's prætorship. But the band of Saxons who had been brought from the shores of the Baltic to grace the festival, refused to gratify the mob of Rome by a public exhibition of their fighting powers, and preferred a quiet death in their cells. In the year 404, the inauguration of the sixth consulship of Honorius was to be celebrated by the customary sacrifice of life. Prudentius pleaded with the Emperor to abolish the ghastly rite,[2] as his father had stopped the sacrifice of animals at the altar. The poet's prayer was answered, not by the will of Honorius, but by the martyrdom of the heroic monk, who flung himself into the arena, and died amid the curses of the mob, whose cruel pleasures he had dared to interrupt.

But even when the cruelties of the arena were abolished, the circus and the theatre maintained for a long time their dangerous attractions. The Roman passion for these spectacles was of marvellous intensity. The austere pagan, Ammianus Marcellinus,[3] relates that, at a time when famine was threatening, and when foreigners, including the "professors of the liberal arts," were ordered to withdraw from the city, three thousand dancing girls were allowed to remain. Long after the time of which Ammianus wrote, the passion for the lubricity of the stage defied all the authority and moral influence of the Christian Church.[4] Orosius and Salvianus regarded the theatre as a more serious danger than even the invasions of the barbarians. S. Augustine had to complain that the African churches were often emptied by the attractions of these spectacles. Sidonius, late in the century,[5]

[1] Sym. *Ep.* ii. 46.

[2] *Contra Sym.*. ii. 1124:

ille urbem vetuit taurorum sanguine tingi;
tu mortes miserorum hominum prohibeto litari.

[3] Amm. Marc. xiv. 6, 19.

[4] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, vi. § 88.

[5] Sid. *Carm.* xxiii. 264 *sqq.*, esp. v. 286:

seu Ledam quis agit Phrygemque ephebum
aptans ad cyathos facit Tonanti
suco nectaris esse dulciorem.

Cf. Tertull. *de Spect.* 10, 17.

describes the doubtful exhibitions of mythological pantomime as if they were still in full life and vigour.

The whole of the imperial legislation with regard to actors shows at once the degradation of the Roman stage and the stubborn attachment of the people to the indescribable enormities perpetrated in the name of art. The worst social curse of the Lower Empire, the hereditary character of nearly all callings, had left perhaps its deepest brand on the actor's profession. Treated as the vilest of mankind, yet the indispensable minister to the pleasures of the people, he was chained to his calling from generation to generation.[1] The Church fought one of its noblest battles to release these unhappy slaves of a cruel voluptuousness; and the hand of S. Ambrose is distinctly seen in some of the laws issued during his great episcopate.[2] The bishops of Africa, where the allurements of the theatre were most powerfully felt,[3] never failed to press the claims of humanity and morality on the stolid Honorius. But their efforts seem to have been ill rewarded, for, in 413, the Emperor orders the "Tribune of Pleasures" at Carthage to recall to their wretched trade the actresses who had, by "imperial kindness," been previously released.[4] From the time of Valentinian I. (371) the Church had indeed gained a great victory.[5] The actress who, *in articulo mortis*, asked for, and received, the last sacraments, was not to be dragged back again, in case of recovery, to her hateful life. But the operation of the law is guarded by careful provisions to prevent a feigned conversion depriving the people of an attractive artiste.[6] Even the law, which was probably extorted by the energy of S. Ambrose in 380, provides that actresses, who have not professed Christianity,

[1] *C. Th.* xv. 7, 4; v. Godefroy's Paratitlon and notes; cf. Wallon, *L'Esclavage*, iii.

[2] See Godefroy's note to *C. Th.* xv. 7, 4.

[3] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, vi. § 69.

[4] *C. Th.* xv. 7, 13.

[5] *Ib.* xv. 7, 1.

[6] See Godefroy's note, t. v. p. 412.

shall have no release. And the law of 381 commands that if an actress, by professing Christianity, has secured her emancipation, but has relapsed into vice, she shall be recalled to theatrical servitude for ever; and the cold, cruel, hardness of the language of this law shows an inhuman contempt for a class whom society doomed to vice, and punished for being vicious.[1] It would be amusing, if it were not painful, to notice the care with which the Emperor regulates the dress of actresses,[2] with but little care for their morals, unless they can steal into the Church by means of the sacraments. The Emperor's sense of dignity, or perhaps a lingering consciousness of divinity, causes him, in 394,[3] to banish all pictures of theatrical performers from the neighbourhood of his own "sacred" statues. But the theatre and the circus were too dear to the people to be crushed by any authority but the growing power of the Church. And even the Church found it a hard task to crush them. Salvianus is rhetorical and he has a *parti pris*. But on matters of notorious fact his testimony must be accepted. And he assures us that Christians were indulging in the madness of the circus and the wantonness of the theatre, when the arms of the Vandals were ringing round the walls of Carthage and Cirta; and that the applause of the spectators was mingled with the groans of the dying and the battle-cries of the besiegers.[4]

[1] *C. Th.* xv. 7, 4, given at Milan; see Godefroy's note. *Ib.* xv. 7, 8, detracta in pulpitum sine spe absolutionis ullius ibi eousque permaneat donec anus ridicula, senectute deformis, nec tunc quidem absolutione potiatur, cum aliud quam casta esse non possit; cf. Rauschen, *Jahrbücher der Christ. Kirche*, pp. 68, 91.

[2] *C. Th.* xv. 7, 11, his quoque vestibus noverint abstinendum quas Graeco nomine a Latino Crustas vocant, etc.; cf. xv. 7, 12, his illud adjicimus ut mimae publico habitu earum virginum quae Deo dicatae sunt non utantur.

[3] *Ib.* xv. 7, 12.

[4] *De Gub. Dei*, vi. §§ 69, 71, fragor, ut ita dixerim, extra muros et intra muros praeliorum et ludicrorum, confundebatur vox morientium voxque bacchantium . . .

## CHAPTER III

### S. AUGUSTINE AND OROSIUS ON THE CAPTURE OF ROME

HITHERTO we have been occupied with the efforts of legislation, often baffled for more than a hundred years, to suppress the open practice of heathen rites. Persecution of any opinion or religious practice, however false, by sheer force, is not a pleasant subject of contemplation to the modern mind. And it is with a feeling of relief that we turn from the threats of exile and death in the anti-pagan laws, to the more potent efforts of Christian dialectic to conquer the ingrained moral and intellectual habits of so many generations of pagan devotion. We may think that in this controversy rhetoric sometimes does duty for logic, that the reasoning is often sophistical, that the facts of history are coloured and perverted to serve a controversial purpose. Yet it is a great advance in a religious struggle, when the appeal is to reason rather than to mere force; and we may well believe that the *City of God*, and even the treatise of Orosius, had an influence on many pagans who were obdurate in the face of threatening edicts. The Emperor might compel a perfunctory conformity to the will of the State; S. Augustine probably won many a wavering, restless spirit to the ideals of the Church which was to dominate the future.

The capture of Rome by Alaric produced a profound effect on the minds both of Christian and pagan.[1]

[1] For its effect on Christians see S. Jerome's *Ep.* 126, § 2, *Ezechielis volumen olim aggredi volui . . . sed in ipso dictandi exordio ita*

Following so soon upon the confiscation of the temples and sacred revenues by Honorius, it gave fresh poignancy to the feelings of numbers who were still attached to the old faith, who had suffered in fortune by the invasion, and many of whom had fled into remote exile.[1] The bitterness of the religious conflict was intensified, and the causes of the unexampled catastrophe became the subject of the last great controversy between the opposing creeds. From the time of M. Aurelius, the pagan controversialists were in the habit of attributing public calamities to apostasy from the national faith.[2] On the occurrence of a famine or pestilence, the mob broke into threats and execrations against the Christians. The war of sophistry had gone on, with ever varying subtlety, according to the fortunes of the Empire at the time. The true Roman was inclined to judge a religion by its material results.[3] His gods were expected to be of use to their worshipper, who purchased their help and favour by sacrificial gift and observance. He could not understand the Christian theory,[4] that calamity might be sent by Heaven for the good of the sufferer. Hence, he naturally attributed the growing troubles of the Empire to neglect of the ancient rites; and, when the last unimaginable horror came,—the sack of the city, which he fondly believed to be destined to endless dominion, the votary of the old gods found an irresistible argument against the pestilent superstition which had first suppressed his worship, and so soon afterwards had, by its impiety, brought the imperial city to the dust.

It is perhaps difficult for us to conceive the impression

animus meus occidentalium provinciarum, et maxime urbis Romae vastatione confusus est, ut, juxta vulgare proverbium, proprium quoque ignorarem vocabulum: diuque tacui, sciens esse tempus lacrimarum.

[1] Hieron. *Ep.* 128, § 4, proh nefas, orbis terrarum ruit. . . . Urbs inclyta et Romani imperii caput uno hausta est incendio. Nulla est regio quae non exules Romanos habeat.

[2] Tertull. *Apol.* 40.

[3] Zos. iv. 59; Sym. *Rel.* 3.

[4] *De Civ. Dei*, i. 8.

which the capture of Rome made on both the heathen and the Christian world. Even the rude barbarian, bred on the Danube or amid the forests of Thuringia, felt a strange awe of that city, so distant, yet so omnipresent in its power, which to his imagination, in her world-wide dominion and marvellous vitality, was a superhuman force. We know how Alaric, while he felt himself drawn on by an irresistible spell to sack the Eternal City, still almost trembled at the prospect of success,[1] and how, as he drew near Rome, his Goths were scattered in panic by the lightnings that shot round the walls of Narnia.[2] The barbarian was impressed chiefly by the power of Rome in imposing her laws on the world. But to the Roman, whether Christian or pagan, she was also the heir of Greece, the seat of culture and letters, of all humanising influences for more than five centuries. She was to Prudentius and Orosius, as well as to Claudian and Rutilius, the beneficent power which had been the mother of peaceful arts, which had made of so many warring races one country, which had spread peace and order wherever her eagles flew.[3] And the belief in her eternity had become an unquestioned article of faith. The uniformity of law, language, and administration, which spread with such quiet power over all geographical barriers, seemed to have become part of the order of nature, as irresistible and as enduring as the laws of the material world.

To the minds therefore both of Christian and pagan, the news of the capture of Rome by Alaric came as a great moral shock. In the sack of the city Christians had fared no better than unbelievers.[4] Their houses had

[1] Sozom. ix. 6; Socr. vii. 10; cf. Claud. *de B. Get.* 507.

[2] Zos. v. 41.

[3] Prudent. *contra Sym.* ii. 640; Oros. v. 2, 1; Claud. *de Cons. Stilich.* iii. 154; Rutil. Namat. i. 63, 83, 133; cf. S. Jerome's outburst on hearing of the capture of Rome, *Ep.* 127, § 12, capitur urbs quae totum cepit orbem; cf. Friedländer, ii. p. 4.

[4] *De Civ. Dei*, i. 9.

been burnt or pillaged, their daughters violated;[1] many of the churches had been despoiled of their sacred treasures.[2] The faith of many Christians was rudely shaken. But far more crushing was the effect of the calamity on those to whom Rome was the hearth of the old religion, attachment to which was identified with patriotism. They had again and again warned the Emperor of the danger of forsaking the gods under whose protection Rome had enjoyed such long prosperity. Now their fears and warnings had been terribly confirmed. "Rome had perished in the Christian times." The State had forfeited the protection of the gods, or was suffering from their anger. The cultivated epicurean, who had little sympathy with either pagan or Christian enthusiasm, contributed his doubts to the cause of the ancient religion. If he believed in any gods at all, he did not believe that they interfered in the affairs of men. But as a patriotic Roman, he may have thought the new spirit of Christian renunciation, which made men indifferent to the earthly commonwealth, and in a world of fierce passions and wild forces acted up to the ideal of the Sermon on the Mount, was responsible for the national humiliation.[3]

The province of Africa was still, in spite of its long Christian tradition, a stronghold of heathen superstition[4] or cultivated scepticism,[5] which not all the eloquence and energy of S. Augustine,[6] backed by the persecuting force of the State, had been able to overpower. The invasion of Alaric and the capture of the city drove crowds of the Roman aristocracy to seek a refuge in the towns of Africa.[7] It may readily be imagined how,

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, i. 16.

[2] As to the precise amount of damage done see Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages*, i. 159.

[3] Cf. the letter of Marcellinus to S. Augustine, *Ep.* 136, § 2.

[4] Aug. *Ep.* 232; cf. *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 20.

[5] Aug. *Ep.* 16, 234.

[6] *Ib.* 97; cf. *Ep.* 93; note 1, p. 43 of this book.

[7] See the description of the way in which they were received by Count Heraclian in Hieron. *Ep.* 130, § 7.

when they arrived with their excited tales of the desecration of the imperial city by the Goths, grief and indignation broke forth, how old hatred, terrified into silence, would be kindled once more, how sceptical acquiescence in the new *régime* would have its old doubts revived. Volusianus, one of the great family of the Albini,[1] a son of that old heathen pontiff described by S. Jerome, and himself a pagan of the gentler sort, was in 412 in a company in which the discords of philosophy and the claims of Christianity were canvassed. In particular Volusianus proposed the question,[2] whether the precept about turning the other cheek to the smiter could be reconciled with the policy of a dominant state, whether, in fact, Christianity was not the cause of the decadence of Rome. The discussion was reported to S. Augustine by Marcellinus, a friend of Volusianus, and drew from the bishop an elaborate reply.[3] The letter in which Augustine strove to remove the doubts of Volusianus and his friends has a great interest as containing the germ of the famous work which Augustine commenced in the following year.[4] The Gospel, he says in effect, is not opposed to war waged justly and mercifully. So far from its doctrines being hostile to the stability of the State, if they were practised by public servants and citizens of every degree, they would prove the salvation of the State. The decay of the Roman commonwealth began long before the coming of Christ in the decay of the old Roman morality, in the spread of venality and licence, which are described in scathing terms by heathen moralists and satirists.[5] Whither, he asks, might not this tide of human depravity have borne us if there had not been planted above it all the Cross, by clinging to

[1] Seeck's *Sym.* clxxix.; Hieron. *Ep.* 107, § 1.
[2] Aug. *Ep.* 136, § 2.
[3] *Ib.* 138, § 16.
[4] Ebert, *Lit. des Mittelalters*, i. 223. Its composition occupied the years 413-426; cf. Aug. *Retract.* ii. 43, 1.
[5] He quotes Sall. *B. Jug.* c. 35 O urbem venalem, etc.

which we might save ourselves from being swept into the abyss? In this morass of vice, this decay of the ancient discipline, there was need for authority from on high to bring home the lesson of voluntary poverty, chastity, benevolence, justice, concord, real piety, all the brightness and strength of virtue; and that not merely for the virtuous conduct of this life, nor to secure complete harmony in the earthly commonwealth, but also to obtain eternal salvation and admission to a celestial commonwealth which shall know no end, to whose citizenship we are joined by faith, hope, and charity. So, as long as we are strangers and sojourners, we must endure, if we cannot amend, those who wish to establish the State on the foundation of an impunity of vice; whereas the early Romans founded and gave it greatness by their virtues. They did not indeed possess a knowledge of the true God, to guide them to the Eternal City. Yet did they hold fast to a certain inbred probity, which might suffice to establish the earthly city, and give it glory and safety. God thus desired to show in the wealthy and glorious empire of Rome how much availed the civic virtues, even without true religion, in order to make men understand that, when that was added, men might become citizens of another state, of which the king is truth, the law is love, and eternity the bourn.

The *City of God* dedicated to Marcellinus, was begun in 413, and not finished till 426,[1] four years before the author's death. It has some of the faults which we might expect from what S. Augustine tells us of the distractions of his daily life;[2] but its vastness of range and conception gives us the measure, not only of the writer's genius, but of the force of the enemy to be overthrown. All that wealth of learning and subtlety of

[1] *Retract.* ii. 43.

[2] *l.c.* quod opus per aliquot annos me tenuit, eo quod alia multa intercurrebant, quae differre non oporteret et me prius ad solvendum occupabant; cf. Possid. *vit. Aug.* c. 19, and *Serm.* 302, quoted in Hurter's ed.

disquisition would not have been wasted by a busy and practical man in trampling out the embers of an exploded superstition. So far as the work is polemical, it is an assault, in the first place, upon the political view of the Roman religion, and, in the next, on the philosophical attempt to rehabilitate it. The circumstances which suggested the work are described in its opening pages, from which we can easily revive the debates which the humiliation of the great city excited. The fall of Rome, exclaims S. Augustine, due to Christianity? Why, the conqueror was a Christian, and respected the altars of the Christian basilicas;[1] whereas your great poet describes Priam slaughtered at the shrine, which could not protect him.[2] Why have the Christians suffered as well as the pagans, do you ask?[3] Because suffering is a different thing to a Christian and a pagan.[4] To the one it is grievous, to the other it may be joyous, a chastisement for his good. The history of Rome is full of crimes and calamities which the gods have either caused or permitted. How have the old gods guarded Rome?[5] Do the memories of the Caudine Forks and Cannae, and many another day of calamity and despair, suggest no doubts about their power or will to guard her? The truth is that the old religion did not give real prosperity,[6] for it contained elements which were fatal to character and happiness. And conquest, unsupported by justice, may be only brigandage on a large scale.[7] Yet here S. Augustine seems guilty of a patriotic inconsistency. He is, after all, a true Roman at heart. He is proud of the great past of Rome, and of the qualities which had given her her place in the world.[8] God made choice of the

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, i. 1; cf. Oros. vii. 39.
[2] *Ib.* i. 2.
[3] *Ib.* i. 9.
[4] *Ib.* i. 10.
[5] *Ib.* iii. 17
[6] *Ib.* iv. 26
[7] *Ib.* iv. 4, remota itaque justitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia? cf. iv. 3, 15; iii. 10; cf. Oros. v. 1, 4.
[8] *Ib.* v. 15, his omnibus artibus tamquam vera via nisi sunt ad honores imperium gloriam . . .

Latin race to establish an empire which should weld the nations of the world into one people. The Latin race chose honour and dominion for its portion, and they had the reward which their purely civic virtue deserved. But the heathen daemons had never brought good to Rome, as they had never warded off evil from her. They aided the cruel Marius to reach a seventh consulship;[1] they allowed the pious Regulus to be put to the extremity of torture.[2] If they did not save the city from being taken by the Gauls,[3] when Roman virtue was at its highest point, why should we fancy that the neglect of their rites has caused the capture by the Goths? And yet S. Augustine attributes to these daemons vast powers for evil, while he will not allow them any power for good. They promised success to Sulla,[4] but they never, with their powers of prevision, tried to avert his crimes. Their power or example corrupted the ancient virtue of the Roman people by legends,[5] which were lessons in cruelty and lust. Their worship has created the horrors of the amphitheatre and the stage.[6] In their name the empire of Rome has been swelled to an unwieldy bulk by incessant wars. During the centuries from the peaceful reign of Numa to the accession of Augustus, a single year in which the gates of war were closed is noted as a miraculous event.[7]

While Augustine was engaged in preparing this final assault on paganism, his fifth book being completed,[8] a young Spanish priest arrived at Hippo about 414. His native country was being devastated by the Sueves and

imperii sui leges imposuerunt multis gentibus . . . Perceperunt mercedem suam; cf. v. 21.

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, ii. 23.

[2] *Ib* i. 15.

[3] *Ib.* ii. 22, sed tamen haec numinum turba ubi erat, cum, longe antequam mores corrumperentur antiqui, a Gallis Roma capta et incensa est?

[4] *Ib.* ii. 24.

[5] *Ib.* ii. 6; cf. iv. 27, prava docent, turpibus gaudent.

[6] *Ib.* ii. 25; cf. ix. 6, ix. 3.

[7] *Ib.* iii. 9.

[8] *Ep.* 169, § 13; cf. § 1 of the same letter, and *Ep.* 166, § 2.

Vandals.[1] He escaped from their snares or violence, and sought a refuge in Africa, which as yet was considered safe from the invaders. S. Augustine was struck with his zeal, readiness, and enthusiasm, and determined to engage him in a historical composition which should serve as a kind of supplement to the *City of God*. The task which was assigned to Orosius was to refute, by an examination of history, the pagan assertion that the fall of Rome was a consequence of her abandonment of her old religion.[2] Rome has been taken by a barbarian chief, said the pagans; her prosperity has for the first time met with a disastrous check. Under her old gods she had an unbroken career of success, resulting in the establishment of equal laws, and a serene and bountiful civilisation among scores of peoples who in former ages were degraded and desolated by continual feuds. It is only a few years since the religion of the Nazarene was made binding on all Romans; and within fifteen years from the death of Theodosius, the destroyer of the ancient faith, the hitherto inviolate seat of Roman government has been desecrated. "Rome has perished in the Christian times."

The work of Orosius had a great popularity in the Middle Ages,[3] and from some modern critics it has received too flattering notice as the first attempt to found a philosophy of history. This description of it can only be accepted, if by the words "philosophy of history" is meant an arbitrary and uncritical handling of the facts to suit an *a priori* theory, or a temporary theological purpose. Orosius himself would hardly have claimed for his work any such character. His researches were not very profound. His authorities are probably limited to the Bible, Livy, Tacitus, Suetonius, Justin, Eutropius, and

[1] Idat. *Chron.* ad a. 410, delatæ cluntibus per Hispanias barbaris, etc.; Oros. iii. 20, 5, 6.

[2] See the Prol. of Orosius.

[3] King Alfred had Orosius translated into Anglo-Saxon. The MSS. from the seventh century are numerous. v. Teuffel, ii. p. 475.

perhaps S. Jerome's version of Eusebius's Chronicle.[1] He was not writing for a remote generation, with a theory of human evolution which would stand the test of scientific criticism. He was a man of his own age, thoroughly convinced of his thesis before his researches began, thoroughly practical, and not over-scrupulous. He cares nothing for the inner springs of historical movements, so far as they are merely human. The chain of natural causes has no interest for him. His eye is fixed on the external fortunes and vicissitudes of the great races who have occupied the stage of history. It is fixed also rather on their calamities and reverses than on anything which might mitigate the tale of "mourning, lamentation, and woe," which has been the portion of the human race before the coming of Christ. His business was to collect in an ordered narrative from the annals of the past, before the final triumph of the Cross, all the tales of misery from war, famine, and pestilence that the human race had suffered, all that was startling and desolating in floods and volcanic fires, all the horrors of monstrous crime. He is convinced that the carnage and ravages of war, the stress of plague and dearth, the convulsions of nature, were more tremendous in the pagan times.[2] Nature herself, like the temper of the Goths,[3] has grown milder with the advent of a purer faith among men! In the process of proving his thesis, Orosius treats mere legend with the same respect as authentic history. The exploits of the Amazons[4] are as useful for his purpose as the invasion of the Gauls of Brennus. In the long catalogue of deadly wars he magnifies the numbers of the slain, and seems almost to exult in the carnage of pre-Christian

[1] He mentions other writers, but probably only at second hand. He knew little of Greek authorities: cf. Mörner, *de Oros. vita*, p. 50, and Peter's *Die Geschichtliche Litt. über die Röm. Kaiserzeit*, ii. 158, 255.

[2] Oros. iv. *Praef.* The world in 414 is as it were only nocturnis pulicibus titillatus!

[3] *Ib.* ii. 14, 3; ii. 19.

[4] *Ib.* i. 15, 4.

battlefields. He has seldom a word to say of the objects for which the victims fell. The glories of peaceful times have no interest for his determined, historical pessimism. There is not a word of the splendour of the age of Pericles.[1] Demosthenes is only referred to as an orator purchased by Persian gold.[2] It is difficult to conceive that such a collection of the gloomiest episodes in history or myth, selected for a single controversial purpose which is everywhere apparent, should have influenced any mind in the learned and cultivated circle of the pagan friends of Symmachus.

Orosius constantly complains of the double exaggeration by which the pagans magnified the prosperity and glory of past ages, and the disasters of their own day.[3] The charge is probably true. The immediate effects of the invasion may have easily been painted in too sombre colours. The capture of Rome so disordered men's imaginations, and awoke such bitterness of party-feeling, that a calm estimate of the facts was hardly possible. Orosius, however, is guilty of the grossest exaggeration on the other side. In his retrospect he surveys the history of the world from the creation, with a determination to see nothing that does not lend itself to his controversial purpose. It is characteristic of the peculiar method and fairness of this work that, in painting the bloody wars of the regal period,[4] the name of Numa is never mentioned. The sack of the city by Brennus[5] was far more terrible and destructive than her capture by Alaric. Hardly a Roman senator escaped the violence of the Gauls. Hardly one lost his life at the hands of the Goths.[6] In old times Sicily was constantly laid waste

[1] Pericles is mentioned once as general, along with Sophocles, i. 21, 15; cf. a somewhat similar and amusing reference to the great age of Greece in Prosp. *Chron.*

[2] Oros. iii. 16, 1.

[3] *e.g.* i. 21, 17; iv. *Praef.*

[4] *Ib.* ii. 4; Morm. p. 37.

[5] Oros. ii. 19.

[6] *Ib.* ii. 19, 13, ibi vix quem quam inventum Senatorem, qui vel absens evaserit, hic vix quemquam

by the convulsions of nature and the ravages of war. In the present quiet and prosperous times, even Etna, which once spread ruin in field and city, sends up only a column of harmless smoke to remind the world of its former energy.[1] Rome was founded in bloodshed, and her career has corresponded to the omens of her birth. There is hardly a break in the monotonous tale of incessant wars,[2] until the universal peace of the reign of Augustus was given to the world by the coming of Christ. In like manner, the fall of Athens, the overthrow of Spartan supremacy, the conquests of Philip and Alexander,[3] are described with a determined exaggeration of the slaughter and misery which they caused. The absurdity, perhaps, culminates, when Orosius inveighs against those who complain that a cowardly brigand (it is thus that Alaric is described) has outraged a single corner of a world which is enjoying generally a secure tranquillity![4] The author occasionally shows some flashes of insight into the position of Rome, and her relation to the barbarian races, to which we shall refer in another chapter. But as to the main drift of his book it is difficult to acquit him of a deliberate distortion of the facts of history.

These two works, of such unequal merit, are noticed here chiefly for the purpose of showing the latent force of the pagan sentiment which they were intended to disarm and silence. Both S. Augustine and Orosius are fully conscious of the magnitude of their task, and of the strength of the enemy. It was not the ignorant superstition of the masses, blindly clinging to the religious usages of their ancestors, which they set themselves chiefly to

require, qui forte ut latens perierit; cf. *de Civ. Dei*, iii. 29; Socr. *Hist. Eccl.* vii. 10, says that many senators were tortured and slain.

[1] Oros. ii. 14, Aethna ipsa, quae tunc cum excidio urbium atque agrorum crebris eruptionibus aestuabat, nunc tantum innoxia specie ad praeteritorum fidem fumat!

[2] *Ib.* iii. 8.

[3] *Ib.* iii. 14: ii. 16, 13; iii. 2, 10; iii. 13, 11.

[4] *Ib.* iii. 20, 9, et nos perpetuae recordationi haesurum putamus quod plurima orbis parte secura unum angulum fugax latro violavit.

discredit and overthrow. The controversy began, as we have seen, in a company of lettered men, whose smouldering doubts about the policy of the religious revolution of Theodosius, flashed out and found expression on the capture of Rome in 410. Both works are addressed to the educated class, who still clung to paganism, either as the ancestral faith of Rome, under the protection of which her great mission had been accomplished, or as enshrining the venerable and imaginative symbols of the lofty and comprehensive theory of God and the Universe, expounded by the school of Alexandria. The *City of God* assails the paganism both of the patriot and the philosopher. It is addressed to a class capable of following the most subtle reasoning, acquainted with the history and antiquities of Rome, or saturated with the metaphysics of Plotinus and Porphyry. The treatise of Orosius is addressed only to the anxious patriot, and it has none of the depth and range and subtlety of S. Augustine's great work. Yet even Orosius could hardly have been read by any one who had not been trained in the higher discipline of the Roman schools.

From this point of view the controversy has a profound interest for the historian. It is true that the voices of the champions of paganism reach us only, as it were, by echoes from the pages of their assailants. Hardly a word has come to us directly from that crowd of philosophic sceptics, conservative dreamers, or devotees, who called forth the full strength of the great bishop of Hippo. It is admitted that the *City of God* dealt a deathblow at the cause of paganism, and, by its learning and dialectic, completed the work of anti-pagan legislation. Its occasional sophistry, which may irritate the modern reader, would probably, in the heat of conflict, be as damaging to the enemy as its sounder arguments. If its appeals to history to show the helplessness of the gods to protect their worshippers from evil fortune often seem to us

unfair and weak, its exposure of the moral evil in the ancient cults is irresistible. The absence of the moral influence in paganism, and the corruption of Roman character by the games and festivals which were sanctioned or enjoined by the old faith, is S. Augustine's most powerful reply to the argument that Rome owed her material success to her gods. Julian saw the moral helplessness of the system, to which he gave a momentary and illusive revival in the years when S. Augustine was an infant. But Julian's life was short, and it may be doubted whether, if it had been longer, his efforts to effect a moral and philosophic renovation of paganism could have given real life to that which was rotten at the root.

Yet, when we look merely at the narrower issue, on which the momentous controversy began, there is a strange feeling of pathos in reading the often sophistical recriminations as to the supernatural causes of a world-wide convulsion. The ancient majesty of the imperial city had been violated, and the magic of that great name was vanishing amid agonies of regret. Some of the fairest provinces of the West had been occupied by the German invaders. Four years after the completion of S. Augustine's great work, the Vandals will have overrun Roman Africa, and the saint's last hours will be disturbed by the roar of battle under the walls of Hippo.[1] The mutual recriminations of Christian and pagan as to the religious causes of the great catastrophe may to some seem small and frivolous, in comparison with the interests which were at stake; to others perhaps rather coarse and materialistic in their conception of the office and value of religion. We have been trained to seek for the causes of the fall of Rome in the exhaustion of the municipal class under fiscal burdens, in bad and cruel administration, in the decline of public spirit and courage. Some

[1] Possid. *vit. Aug.* c. 29.

historical critics, even those bred in the traditions of the Catholic Church, are almost ready to take the pagan side in the quarrel, and to find the causes of the collapse in the ascetic spirit, which, by contemning wealth and refusing to bear the burdens of civil society, undermined its economic and political stability.[1] The controversial part of the *City of God* will probably have the fate of all polemics inspired by the needs or passions of the moment. But its spiritual and constructive side, which lies beyond the scope of this work, will be a permanent possession of the race. It lifts the eye from the mundane level on which the relative material advantages of opposing creeds are balanced or fiercely contrasted. Eternity is not promised by the Christian's God to anything earthly. The spiritual city alone does not pass away. It has no frontiers, it draws its citizens from all races and peoples, it embraces all the faithful on either side of the river of death. *Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis.*

[1] Renan, *Marc. Aurèle*, p. 603.

# CHAPTER IV

## SOME CAUSES OF THE VITALITY OF THE LATER PAGANISM

THE dialectic of S. Augustine is regarded as having completed the overthrow of the pagan cause. Yet his assaults are directed against the old State religion of Rome, rather than against those cults of Egypt and Syria [1] which had, for more than two centuries, practically overshadowed the religion of Numa.[2] From a controversial point of view S. Augustine was right. Although the native gods of Latium no longer inspired much devotion, they were the recognised protectors of the old Roman state. Their cults were intertwined with the whole fabric of public and private life. Even the Christian emperors, till the time of Gratian, assumed the office of Pontifex Maximus. The old sacred colleges still met for ceremonial functions in the reign of Theodosius.[3] The festival of the Lupercalia, which was traced back to the Arcadian Evander, was, with all its coarse and savage ritual, celebrated down to the last years of the fifth century.[4]

In the fourth century the ancient religion of Latium, while revered and defended as the symbol of national greatness by the conservative patriot, supplied little nutri-

[1] He refers, however, to the cult of Mater Deum, i. c. 5.

[2] But the old rites and festivals, *e.g.* the Lupercalia and Ambarvalia, were sedulously kept up; cf. Réville, *Rel. unter den Sev.* p. 26.

[3] Sym. *Ep.* i. 51.

[4] Gibbon, c. 36. Cf. Virg. *Aen.* viii. 343. It was revived by Augustus (Suet. *Octav.* c. 31). Luperci are found in Inscriptions of Mauretania, *C.I.L.* viii. 9405, 9406.

ment for the devotional cravings of the age. The old Roman theology was a hard, narrow, unexpansive system of abstraction and personification, which strove to represent in its Pantheon the phenomena of nature, the relations of men in the state or the clan, every act and feeling and incident in the life of the individual. But, unlike the mythologies of Hellas and the East, it had no native principle of growth or adaptation to altered needs of society and the individual imagination. It was also singularly wanting in awe and mystery. The religious spirit which it cultivated was formal, timid, and scrupulous.[1] It was bound up with the everyday business and practical life of society. Its sacred colleges were not, except in the case of the vestals, set apart from the world; they were simply a kind of magistracy for the exact performance of certain sacred rites and functions. When the ceremony was over, the celebrant returned to ordinary civic life. The old Roman worship was business-like and utilitarian.[2] The gods were partners in a contract with their worshippers, and the ritual was characterised by all the hard and literal formalism of the legal system of Rome. The worshipper performed his part to the letter with the scrupulous exactness required in pleadings before the praetor.[3] To allow devotional feeling to transgress the bounds prescribed by immemorial custom was "superstitio."[4] Such a religion was little calculated to satisfy generations who had come under the spell of Greek philosophy and the mysticism and ecstatic devotion of the East.

The conservative and patriotic spirit which, as in the case of Symmachus and Flavianus, clung to the old

[1] Boissier, *La Rel. Rom.* Introd. c. 2; Preller, *Mythol. Rom.* (Dieta), Introd. i.

[2] Boissier, *Rel. Rom.* i. pp. 21, 22; Mommsen, *Rom. Hist.* i. 182; cf. Cicero's definition of pietas (*de Nat. Deor.* i. 41), as justitia adversum deos.

[3] Preller, p. 102; Boissier i. 14 *sqq.*

[4] Boissier, i. p. 23.

national faith, as inseparable from the safety and dignity of Rome, was undoubtedly a serious obstacle to the final triumph of Christianity. But he would ill interpret the religious history of the time who should confine his attention to the official paganism. The paganism which was really living, which stirred devotion and influenced souls, was that neither of Latium nor of Hellas. It came from the East—from Persia, Syria, Egypt—the homes of a conception of religion which was alien to the native spirit both of Greece and Rome.[1] These Oriental cults satisfied emotional cravings, which found no stimulus for devotion in the arid abstractions of the old Latin creed, or in the brilliant anthropomorphism of Greece. They aroused and cultivated, often to a dangerous degree, intense and ecstatic feeling. In their mysteries, if they did not teach a higher morality, they raised the worshipper above the level of cold, conventional conformity, and satisfied in some way the longing for communion with the deity, and assurance of a life beyond the grave. They had their modes of appeasing the troubled conscience by expiation, by ascetic abstinence, by the baptism of blood. In the sacred corporations,[2] such as the Isiaci and Pastophori, they provided, what was the great want of the times, social help and mutual encouragement, the stimulus or the consolation of common interests and enthusiasms. Whoever will cast his eyes over the inscriptions of the closing years of the fourth century will be struck by the number of dedications to deities of foreign origin—to Isis, the Sun, Magna Mater, and Attis, above all, to Mithra. He will find on these tablets some of the greatest names among the Roman aristocracy, a Clodius Hermogenianus,[3] a Flavianus,[4] a Venustus,[5]

[1] Boissier, *Rel. Rom.* i. pp. 396 *sqq.*; Réville, *Rel. zu Rom. unter den Sev.* c. ii.; Duruy, *Hist. Rom.* v. 739; Friedländer, iii. p. 444.

[2] Renan, *M. Aurèle*, p. 577; Boissier, i. 417.

[3] *C.I.L.* vi. 499, *a.p.C.* 374.

[4] *Ib.* vi. 501, *a.p.C.* 383.

[5] *Ib.* vi. 503, *a.p.C.* 390.

a Volusianus,[1] a Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. If he looks into the inscriptions of the provinces, he will discover that these worships have been carried by Roman travellers or soldiers to Gaul,[2] Spain, Britain, to remote camps on the edge of the African desert, or on the Rhine and the Danube. He will notice on many of these monuments that the person commemorated has held sacred office in a great number of these cults, that he has been priest of Mithra the unconquered, priest of the Sun, priest of Isis, and that he has performed the Taurobolium.[3] He will observe with interest that there is a tone of moral and devout feeling which he had not expected to find in a pagan epitaph. The famous monument erected by Fabia Aconia Paulina to her husband Praetextatus,[4] after recording his many secular and sacred honours, and celebrating his birth, learning, and culture, speaks of his contempt for these transient distinctions, and the hope of a blessed reunion after death. And Paulina is fervent in her gratitude for the love and confidence with which her husband has made her a partner in all sacred things. Praetextatus, in a companion inscription, commemorates his wife as the sharer of his inmost secrets, devoted to the temple service, a friend of the gods, pure in mind and body, benevolent to all.

These cults, which were the vital centre of the last generation of paganism in the West, had found their way to Rome long before the imperial period. The Eastern conquests of the Republic made the maintenance of old Roman exclusiveness impossible. In a city which was the meeting-place of so many races, it was hopeless for

[1] *C.I.L.* vi. 512, *a.p.C.* 390; cf. *ib.* 736, 755.

[2] *Ib.* xii. 405, 1311 (Mater deum), xii. 2706, 1535 (Mithra), xii. 734, 1562 (Isis). The Taurobolium appears in an immense number of Gallic inscriptions in *C.I.L.* xii.; cf. Renan, *M. Aurèle*, p. 579. See the provincial inscriptions to Mithra collected in Cumont's *Monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra*, i. pp. 129-171.

[3] Cf. several of the Inscr. referred to, and particularly *C.I.L.* vi. 504.

[4] *C.I.L.* vi. 1778-79.

the most vigilant conservatism,[1] however much inspired with a suspicion of exotic modes of devotion, finally to shut them out. The attempt was made again and again, and as often defeated. Foreign traders, foreign slaves, travellers, and soldiers returning from long campaigns in distant regions, were constantly introducing religious novelties which fascinated the lower class, always the most susceptible of religious excitement, and then penetrated to the classes of culture and privilege. The Great Mother of Pessinus found a home at Rome in the second Punic war.[2] The Pastophori of Serapis were established as early as the days of Sulla.[3] After repeated attempts on the part of the government to exclude Egyptian worships,[4] the triumvirs, in 42 B.C., founded a temple of Isis and Serapis in the Campus Martius.[5] The worship of Mithra, the solar cult which was destined to be the most formidable rival of Christianity in its last struggle with heathenism, was introduced in 70 B.C. after the overthrow of the Cilician pirates by Pompey.[6] Under the Flavian dynasty the religions of the East had special prominence.[7] But the Eastern cults had their great triumph in the age of the Antonines, and under the Oriental princes of the third century. A considerable number of dedications to Sol Invictus, Serapis, and Mithra belong to the reigns of M. Aurelius and Commodus.[8] Antoninus Pius erected a temple to Mithra at Ostia;[9] and Commodus had a fancy to be initiated in the Isiac mysteries, and actually took the tonsure of that

[1] Boissier, *La Rel. Rom.* i. p. 384.

[2] Liv. xxix. 10.

[3] Preller, p. 479.

[4] *Ib.* p. 479. Cf. the picture of the Egyptian gods arrayed against the Roman at Actium, Virg. *Aen.* viii. 698:

omnigenûmque deûm monstra et latrator Anubis, etc.

[5] Dion Cass. xlvii. 15.

[6] Plut. *Pomp.* c. 24, ὧν ἡ τοῦ Μίθρου καὶ μέχρι δεῦρο διασώζεται καταδειχθεῖσα πρῶτον ὑπ' ἐκείνων (*i.e.* τῶν πειρατῶν).

[7] Suet. *Vesp.* c. 7.

[8] Cf. *C.I.L.* vi. 723-727, 740, 746, 354, viii. 2630.

[9] Réville, p. 81.

worship.[1] Caracalla and Alexander Severus both added to the splendour of the temple service of Isis.[2] Aurelian, whose mother was a priestess of the Sun, attributed his victory over Zenobia to the god's favour, and built a stately temple for him at Rome, enriched with the spoils of Palmyra.[3]

The Egyptian cults, and pre-eminently that of Isis, had an immense influence on the Roman mind during the whole imperial period. Isis was a deity with many functions and many attractions.[4] She was the goddess of the springtime and of the fruitfulness of nature. She was the guardian of those whose life is on the sea. She had a special care of women in the troubles of motherhood. She lighted souls into the world beyond death. The ceremonies of her worship, which in many respects show a singular rapprochement to those of the Catholic Church, had a powerful effect on the imagination and the feelings. There is a sacerdotal class set apart for spiritual functions and the guidance of souls, and distinguished by the tonsure and a peculiar dress.[5] There are baptismal rites of initiation, for which ascetic abstinence is a necessary preparation. In Egypt, on the very ground which in the fourth and fifth centuries was to be the home of Christian monks, there was long before them the ascetic life of the cloister devoted to the worship of Serapis.[6] The ritual has many traces of our modern ideas of devotion, and foreshadows in some respects that

[1] Lamprid. *Com.* c. 9, sacra Isidis coluit ut et caput raderet et Anubin portaret.

[2] Id. *A. Sev.* c. 26; Ael. Spart. *Carac.* c. 9.

[3] Flav. Vop. *Aur.* c. 4, 31, 39; Zos. i. 61.

[4] Preller, p. 477; Réville, *Rel. under den Sev.* p. 53.

[5] Apul. *Met.* xi. c. 10, antistites sacrorum . . candido linteamine cinctum pectoralem adusque vestigia strictim injecti . . . capillum derasi funditus, vertice praenitentes. Cf. Plut. *de Is. et Osir.* 4 ἐφ' ὅτῳ τὰς τρίχας οἱ ἱερεῖς ἀνορίθενται καὶ λινᾶς ἐσθῆτας φορέουσιν.

[6] Chaeremon, quoted by Porphyr. *de Abstin.* (Ἕνιοι. *Hist. Gr.* iii. p. 497), ἀπέδοσαν ὅλον τὸν βίον τῇ τῶν θείων θεωρίᾳ καὶ θεάσει . . . λιτότητα δὲ ἐπετήδευσαν καὶ κατανυκτήν, ἐγκράτειάν τε καὶ καρτερίαν.

of the Catholic Church. There are matins and vespers to rouse the goddess or to lay her to rest, at which white-robed priests officiate.[1] Women receive a prominence which was denied them under the old religion, and their devotion to the ritual of Syria and Egypt was a social characteristic of the early Empire[2] as it was of the closing years of paganism in the West.[3] There was indeed much in these cults calculated to have a special charm for female sensibility. It is a common characteristic of some of the most popular of them that the interest centres on a divine death and resurrection. There is the alternation of the passionate sense of loss with the passionate joy of recovery, and the emotions, as in the mysteries of an earlier time, were probably stimulated by striking scenic effects. The cold, calm, rigidly formal religion of old Rome has given place to ecstatic devotion, and the sense of sin and error finds relief in penitential discipline and solemn cleansing.

In the last struggles of paganism with the Christian Church, the cult which exercised the most powerful attraction was that of Mithra.[4] It gave expression to the growing tendency to monotheism,[5] and to the craving for moral support, purification, and comfort through religion, which became more and more imperious in the third and fourth centuries. It was at first a sun-worship of Persian origin. But its early character was greatly altered by syncretism, by accretions from other, especially Phrygian, worships, and by natural development to meet the devotional and moral wants of the times. The

[1] Apul. *Met.* xi. 20.

[2] Juv. vi. 489, 528; *C.I.L.* xii. 1532, 3061 (Narbonne), viii. 2630 (Numidia). Devotion to Isis in the time of Catullus and Tibullus seems to have been compatible with very loose morals. Catull. x. 26; Tibull. i. 3, 23. Cumont, i. 178, denies that women were admitted to the mysteries of Mithra.

[3] *C.I.L.* vi. 1779, 1780.

[4] Réville, *Rel. unter den Sev.* pp. 74 *sqq.*; Preller, p. 490; Duruy, vi. p. 146, vii. 48; Renan, *M. Aurèle*, p. 576.

[5] See the centralisation of many worships in the temple of the Sun attempted by Elagabalus, Lamprid. c. 3; cf. c. 7.

worship of the Sun was the central force in Julian's attempt to remedy the dogmatic and moral weakness of paganism. In the fourth century the ancient god of light has become the supreme Power,[1] who is all-seeing, all-pervading, who is the lord and giver of life, the cleanser from sin, the protector of the miserable, the conqueror of evil daemons and death, who assures to his faithful worshippers the hope of immortality. The monuments of Mithra have been found all over the Roman world,[2] in all the regions of Italy, in Spain, Africa, and all the provinces bordering on the Danube and the Rhine, in Gaul, and in Britain. Nothing is more familiar than the group in which the young warrior, wearing a Phrygian cap and short tunic, and mantle blown back by the wind, kneels on the back of a bull and buries his poniard in its throat, surrounded by the mystic beasts and the two Dadophori.[3] His worship was conducted in underground grottoes, brilliantly lighted and adorned with symbolic figures. The symbolism of his ritual has exercised and puzzled the ingenuity of modern archaeologists.[4] Probably it conveyed many meanings to the devotee; but the central idea in the end seems to have been that of a Power who conquers the spirits of darkness, leads souls from the underworld, and gives peace by purification. The ritual was complicated and impressive. There was a kind of baptism of neophytes, confirmation, consecration of bread and water, cleansing of the tongue with honey, and other ablutions. The great festival of the god was celebrated

[1] Réville, p. 88; Cumont, *Monuments figurés, etc. de Mithra*, Textes Orientaux, i. pp. 1-6. Cf. Porphyr. quoted *ib.* pp. 39, 40, 41. In his interesting book on *Neoplatonism*, p. 56, Dr. Bigg says that the religion of Mithra was "the purest and most elevated of all non-Biblical religions."

[2] Preller, p. 496; *C.I.L.* viii. 8440 (Sitifis in Mauretania), 9256, xii. 1535 (Gallia Narb.) 2706, v. 807, 809 (Aquileia), 4283. Cf. Cumont, i. pp. 87-171.

[3] See the representation of the Vatican group in Duruy, v. p. 748; cf. Cumont, ii. iii. passim.

[4] Réville, pp. 89, 90-94; cf. the materials accumulated in Cumont, ii. and iii.

on the 25th of December.[1] His mysteries created a powerful bond of union, and in this respect satisfied one of the most urgent needs of society under the later Empire. The initiated formed a close guild or corporation presenting many points of resemblance to Freemasonry.[2] The novice had to submit to a series of severe ordeals and ascetic exercises, prolonged fasting, flagellation, passing through water and flame. There were many degrees of initiation bearing fantastic titles,[3] and culminating in the dignity which bore the title of Pater. Whatever the real moral effect of initiation may have been, there can be no doubt that it developed a warm devotion and faith in that future life which it promised to the pure worshipper.

The most impressive rite in Mithra-worship was the baptism of blood, called the Taurobolium. This ceremony was apparently a sacramental repetition of the symbolic slaughter of the bull by the god himself. It was originally part of the Phrygian ritual of the Great Mother, and is connected with her name on many monuments;[4] but, after the religious fashion of the times, it had been absorbed by the cult of the Sun. The earliest trace of the Taurobolium in the West is found on a Neapolitan monument of the last years of Hadrian's reign.[5] It spread far and wide through the provinces, and traces of it are found near Lyons as early as 184 A.D.[6] The ceremonial has been described in a well-

[1] Réville. p. 95. But cf. Cumont, i. p. 68 n.

[2] Preller, p. 497; Réville, p. 97. On the ordeals of initiation, see Cumont, i. p. 27.

[3] Hieron. *Ep.* 107, § 2, 'ad Laetam,' where the titles of them are given, Corax, Gryphus, Miles, Leo, Perses, Heliodromus, Pater; *v.* Cumont, i. 18, n. 1. See the title Pater in 504, 1778 of *C.I.L.* vi.

[4] Réville, p. 66; *C.I.L.* vi. 505, 506, 508, iii. 5524, xii. 357, 1222, 4325.

[5] Boissier, *Rel. Rom.* i. p. 412.

[6] *C.I.L.* xii. 1782. This taurobolium lasted from the 20th to the 23rd of April. At Orange (in Gallia Narbonensis) an inscription was found commemorating a taurobolium pro salute Imp. M. Aurel. Commodi, *C.I.L.* xii. 1222. A taurobolium of 245 A.D. in Gall. Narb. was performed for the imperial house on 30th Sept. xii. 1567; cf. viii. 5524, 8263 (African Inscr.)

known passage of Prudentius,[1] and the inscriptions of his age frequently refer to it.[2] The penitent was placed in a trench covered over with planks having apertures between them. A bull was led on to this platform, and with due ceremonial,[3] conducted by the priests, was slaughtered so that the blood streaming from its throat might bathe the votary below. It was esteemed a matter of great importance that not a drop should be wasted, and the subject of the rite used all his efforts to enjoy the full benefit of the sacred flood. The ceremony was a long and costly one, attended by great crowds, with the magistrates at their head. Its effects were supposed to last for twenty years, when it was often repeated.[4] It was believed to work some sort of spiritual cleansing and reform, and the man who had enjoyed such a blessing left the record of it on stone, often concluding with the striking phrase, *in aeternum renatus*.[5]

This religion was the focus of the real devotion of the last age of paganism. It was supported with defiant zeal by some of the greatest senatorial houses, and offered the most stubborn resistance to the anti-pagan laws. The dedications to Mithra are most numerous [6] in the very years when the Christian Empire was destroying his grottoes. M. Renan has declared his belief [7] that, if the growth of Christianity had been checked by some mortal weakness, Mithraism might have become the religion of the Western world. With a true instinct, the Christian controversialists, from the second century, recognised in this cult the most dangerous spiritual foe

[1] Prud. *Peristeph.* x. 1011. See a sketch of the scene in Duruy, v. 743.

[2] *C.I.L.* vi. 499, 504, 509, 511.

[3] *Ib.* xii. 1782, 1567.

[4] *Ib.* vi. 512 (iterato viginti annis expletis), 502.

[5] *Ib.* vi. 510.

[6] *Ib.* vi. 751, 752, 753, 754, 1778, 510, 500, 504, 511. These inscr. belong to the years 376-387; cf. Hieron. *Ep.* 107, § 2, ante paucos annos propinquus vester Graccus cum praefecturam gereret urbanam nonne specum Mithrae . . . subvertit, fregit, excussit. This refers to the year 376. But cf. note *g* in Migne's ed. col. 868.

[7] *M. Aurèle*, p. 579.

of the Church, and ascribed its similarity to Christian ritual to the malign ingenuity of daemons.[1] In its expiation for sins by bloody baptism, its ascetic preparation for the holy mysteries, its oblation of the consecrated bread, its symbolic teaching of the resurrection, they might well see a cunning device of the Evil One to find a false resting-place for souls who were longing for the light.

Whether such worships as we have been describing aroused or satisfied a genuine devotional feeling in our modern sense, is a question which it is difficult to answer. But the thoughtful student will probably hesitate before he answers in the negative. The gulf which separates us from the world of heathen imagination is so wide, the influence of custom and old association in matters of religion is so powerful, that we may easily do injustice to the devout sentiment of paganism. Grotesque or barbarous religious symbols, even those tainted in their origin with the impurity attaching to nature-worship,[2] often sloughed off their baser elements, and, with the development of a more sensitive morality,[3] and a higher conception of the divine, may have become the vehicles of a real religious emotion. What the worshipper will find in a worship depends greatly on what he brings. The same symbol or rite will have various meanings and effects to different minds. To the mind to which it is strange, it may seem to have no meaning at all. The mystery of the death of a

[1] Prud. *Peristeph.* x. 1008; Tertull. *de Cor.* c. 15; *de Praescrip. Haeret.* 40, Mithra signat illic in frontibus milites suos; celebrat et panis oblationem, et imaginem resurrectionis inducit, etc.; S. Paulin. Nol. *Poem. Ult.* 112-117.

[2] The initiation of Commodus in the mysteries of Isis and Mithra, and the devotion of Elagabalus to sun-worship make one suspicious. But there is a long interval between these monsters and the apparently blameless devotees of the reign of Gratian; cf. Lamprid. *Com.* c. 9; *Elagab.* c. 3, and *C.I.L.* vi. 1778, 1779.

[3] Note the horror with which the infamies of Elagabalus were regarded by all classes, Lamprid. *El.* c. 17; cf. Boissier, *Rel. Rom.* ii. pp. 419 *sqq.*; Friedländer, iii. p. 611.

divine being, his descent to the underworld, and his joyful restoration, was the central idea of many of the cults which most influenced the religious feeling of antiquity. The ritual in which that feeling found expression would to us now appear perhaps shocking, perhaps grotesque and absurd. The drama of the Eleusinian goddesses, if we could witness it, would probably be a poor and tasteless show, with no spiritual contents.[1] Yet there is no doubt that it produced a profound effect on the devotee, and Pindar gave voice to the universal sentiment of Greece when he said,[2] "Happy he who has seen the spectacle: he knows the bourn of life, he knows its divine source." Even among those who hold the same central truths of the Christian faith, how hard it is for the member of one sect to join in the ritual of another. The Puritan, accustomed to express his devotion in bare and simple forms consecrated to him by the memories of early religious emotion, is unable to conceive the awe and tenderness which the Mass excites in the devout Catholic, who has witnessed its ceremonial from infancy.

It is fortunate that we have preserved to us in the pages of Apuleius an invaluable description of an initiation into the mysteries of Isis, which, though the scene is laid in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, was probably often reproduced in the closing years of paganism.

The people of Corinth are about to celebrate the spring festival of Isis, and the opening of the busy traffic on the Aegean, by a religious procession to the shore, and the offering of a consecrated vessel to the goddess who cares for the toilers of the sea. Lucius, who has been imprisoned by evil arts in the forms of an ass, is

[1] Maury, *Rel. de la Grèce*, ii. p. 340; Lob. *Aglaoph.* i. pp. 111, 112; Gard. and Jevons, *Greek Antiq.* p. 283.

[2] Pind. *Frag.* 137 (Christ); cf. Soph. *O.C.* 1051; *Frag.* 753:

ὡς τρὶς ὄλβιοι
κεῖνοι βροτῶν οἳ ταῦτα δερχθέντες τέλη
μόλωσ' ἐς Ἅιδου.

awaked by a dazzling light, and in a fit of devotion cries to the Queen of Heaven, worshipped under many names, to deliver him from his cruel fate. In answer to his prayer, there rose from the moonlit sea a divine and awful form,[1] which no words could shadow forth. Her long rich tresses were crowned with flowers, and with a radiant moonlike disc upheld by arching snakes on either side. Her robe of glistening white now changed to saffron, now flushed into rose-like flame. Her mantle of deepest darkness was bordered with the bickering light of stars. "Lo, I come," the vision said, "in answer to thy prayers, I Nature, mother of all things, mistress of all the elements, the primal birth of all the ages, supreme divinity, Queen of the world of shades, first of the inhabitants of heaven, in whom all gods have their unchanging type. . . . One Power adored by all the world under many a name and with many rites. . . . Dry thy tears and assuage thy grief: already by my providence the dawn of a saving day is breaking. Attend my solemn festival and await the touch of my priest which shall set thee free. Become my servant, and live in hope by constant devotion and steadfast purity to see my glory in the world to come."

Lucius awoke with a strange gladness in the freshness of the morning. The birds are singing under the inspiration of the spring, hymning the mother of the stars and the ages, the mistress of the universe.[2] The young foliage is rustling in the southern breeze. The sea is asleep, hardly disturbed by a ripple. The naked splendour of heaven is not veiled by a single cloud.[3] A great procession is forming, a picturesque masquerade in various character and costume. First come the belted soldier, the hunter with short tunic and hunting

[1] Apul. *Met.* xi. cc. 3-6.

[2] *Ib.* xi. c. 7, matrem siderum, parentem temporum, orbisque totius dominam blando mulcentes affamine.

[3] *Ib.*, caelum autem nubilosa caligine disjecta nudo sudoque luminis proprii splendore candebat.

spears, an effeminate figure wearing jewels and false hair, a gladiator with helmet, sword, and greaves. Another follows with the well-known mantle, beard, and sandals of the wandering philosopher. A bear is borne along in a matron's litter. An ass, with wings fastened to its flanks, carries a feeble old man, to represent Bellerophon and Pegasus to the laughing crowd. Women in white robes scatter flowers along the route. Then follows a mixed crowd of men and women and youths in snowy vestments, bearing torches and candles, and chanting a sacred poem to the melody of flutes. Next comes the throng of the initiated, men and women, of every age and rank, clad in white, and the priests with shaven heads carrying the sacred symbols.[1] Last of all are borne the images of the great Egyptian gods, and the pix containing the holy mysteries.[2] On the approach of the chief priest, Lucius was restored to humanity by a magic garland, and the miracle is made the subject of an address, in which he dwells on the power and the goodness of the goddess.[3] "Behold," he says, "ye impious doubters, and recognise your errors. Behold one who has by the grace of Isis been delivered from his woes." And Lucius, that his future life may be shielded from the cruelty of Fortune, is exhorted to join in the holy warfare and put on the yoke of a willing service.[4] The procession, with the favoured Lucius in their midst, soon reached the margin of the sea.[5] There a sacred bark, resplendent with white sails and ensigns of gold, and pictures of strange Egyptian legend, was

[1] Apul. *Met.* xi. c. 7, sed antistites sacrorum, proceres illi qui candido linteamine cinctum pectoralem adusque vestigia strictim injecti potentissimorum deum proferebant insignia exuvias.

[2] *Ib.* c. 11, ferebatur ab alio cista secretorum capax, penitus celans operta magnificae religionis.

[3] *Ib.* c. 15, videant irreligiosi, et errorem suum recognoscant.

[4] *Ib.*, quo tibi tamen tutior sis atque munitior, da nomen huic sanctae militiae . . . et ministerii jugum subi voluntarium.

[5] *Ib.* c. 16, navem faberrime factam, picturis miris Egyptiorum circumsecus variegatam summus sacerdos . . . deae nuncupavit dedicavitque.

consecrated with mystic ceremonies and solemn prayer.[1] Fragrant odours filled the air, libations were poured upon the waves. The holy vessel, which was to win the protection of the goddess for the sailor, was launched before a gentle breeze, and the crowd watched its voyage till it faded in the distance.

Then opens another scene in the drama. The procession returns to the temple. The images and symbols of the gods are placed in the sanctuary. Then, standing on the steps, the scribe summons the sacred Guild of the Pastophori, vowed to the service of the deity, to a solemn meeting. He reads a prayer,[2] for the mighty prince, the Senate, the knights, the whole people of Rome, for all upon the sea, for the wealth and prosperity of all subjects. And the congregation is dismissed with a solemn form,[3] which in its Latin equivalent remains embedded in the name of the most sacred rite of the Catholic Church. Full of the thought of his former misery, and of the joy of deliverance, the neophyte is lost in devotion. He remains in constant attendance before the image of the loving power which has wrought his salvation. He makes her temple his home. Day and night without a pause are spent in prayer before her. He is filled with longing for the supreme joy of full communion which has been promised him; yet he cannot escape from the anxious thought that his feeble virtue may be unable to keep the law of this spiritual service.[4] Another vision from the goddess quiets his distrust, and stimulates his longing. He rushes to the temple as the offices of the early morning

[1] Apul. *Met.* xi. c. 16.

[2] *Ib.* c. 17, indidem de sublimi suggestu, de libro, de litteris fausta vota praefatus: Principi Magno, Senatuique et Equiti, totoque Romano Populo, nauticis, navibus, quaeque sub imperio mundi nostratis reguntur, etc.

[3] Λαοῖς ἄφεσις. Réville, *Rel. unter den Sev.* p. 57. Cf. note in Hildebrand's ed. p. 1051. The right reading has probably been restored.

[4] Apul. *Met.* xi. c. 19, tamen religiosa formidine retrahebar, quod enim sedulo percontaveram, difficile religionis obsequium, et caerimoniarum abstinentiam satis arduam, etc.

are beginning. The white veils of the holy image are drawn aside. The holy water from the secret spring is sprinkled. The litany of the dawn is performed at the altars. He is more fervent than ever, and begs the pontiff to admit him to the crowning rite. But the venerable man gently moderates his too eager impatience. The goddess holds the keys of hell and of the path of salvation, and all must wait for the signal of her will.[1] He who will enjoy her secret communion must die a voluntary death, that her grace may recall him from the very confines of death and life by a new birth, as it were, to run a new course of salvation. The votary must await in patient humility the signs of her will, and meanwhile prepare himself for the holy mysteries by long abstinence.

At last the sign comes in the silence of the night. Lucius rises before the dawn and presents himself before the priest who, having laid his hands on him, leads him into the sanctuary. After the morning sacrifice, the sacred books, containing a liturgy in an unknown tongue, and covered with hieroglyphic symbols, are brought out.[2] The neophyte after solemn prayer is bathed and baptized, and receives secret instructions as to his further preparation. Ten days more he spends in fasting. And then at vespers came the hour which was to crown his longings. The priest leads him clad in linen vestments into the holy place. What he saw and heard could never be fully told. All that he could tell the world was that he drew nigh the bounds of Death, and returned across the elemental spaces. "At midnight he saw the sun in his

[1] Apul. *Met.* c. 21, nam et inferûm claustra et salutis tutelam in deae manu posita, ipsamque traditionem ad instar voluntariae mortis et precariaesalutiscelebrari: quippequum transactis vitae temporibus jam in ipso finitae lucis limine constitutos . . . numen deae soleat elicere et sua providentia quodam modo renatos ad novae reponere rursus salutis curricula.

[2] *Ib.* c. 22, ac matutino peracto sacrificio, de opertis adyti profert quosdam libros, litteris ignorabilibus praenotatos, partim figuris cujuscemodi animalium, concepti sermonis compendiosa verba suggerentes, etc.

most dazzling splendour, and came into the presence of the Powers who rule in Heaven and Hell."

The following morning, Lucius, dressed in gorgeous robes embroidered with dragons and griffons, was exhibited to the eyes of an admiring multitude. Yet his own humble gratitude for the favour of the goddess was paid in prostration before her altar and constant prayer. Nor could he tear himself from the scene of these sacred emotions[1] without an agony of regret.[2] His feelings, as he left the scene of his second birth, are embalmed in a prayer which throws a curious light on the inner spirit of the later paganism. "Holy one, constant saviour of the race of men, so bountiful in cherishing them, so tender in the mother's love which thou dost bestow on the wretched. Nor day nor night, nor shortest moment passes unmarked by thy benefits, without the help of thy protection for men on sea and land, without thy succouring hand outstretched to ward off the storms of life. Powers above and powers below alike wait on thy will. Thou makest the world to revolve, thou givest his light to the sun, thou art ruler of the universe, thou dost tread Tartarus under thy feet. To thee are due the harmony of the spheres, the return of the seasons, the gladness of the gods, the obedience of the elements. At thy bidding the breezes blow, the clouds gather, seeds germinate and grow. Birds which pass across the sky, beasts which wander on the hills, serpents which lurk underground, the monsters which swim the deep, all tremble before thy majesty. But I am too feeble in mind to speak thy praise, too poor in worldly goods to pay thee sacrifice; nor have I wealth of utterance to tell all that I feel of thy grandeur. A thousand lips, a thousand tongues, an unbroken eternity

[1] Apul. *Met.* xi. c. 24, inexplicabili voluptate simulacri divini perfruebar, irremunerabili quippe beneficio pigneratus.

[2] . . . provolutus denique ante conspectum deae et facie mea diu detersis vestigiis ejus, lacrimis obortis singultu crebro sermonem interficiens . . . et verba devorans, aio.

of unfailing praise would not avail. What the pious soul, though poor withal, may do, that will I perform. The features of thy holy godhead will be treasured in the thoughts of my inmost soul for ever more."

This may not be the expression of a modern piety. Yet he must be a hard and unsympathetic critic who does not catch in this prayer the ring of a genuine religious emotion. When we read of the passionate devotion aroused in Lucius by the Isiac rites, we begin to understand the fervour with which Aconia Paulina,[1] herself a priestess of Isis, speaks, in the famous inscription on the monument of Praetextatus, of her husband's contempt for the fleeting honours of the world in comparison with his religious privileges, and records her gratitude for his having made her a partner in his religious life.

But there is earlier evidence than Apuleius that the worship of Isis, though unfortunately often combined with very lax morality, was the source of real devotional feeling in purer souls. Three hundred years before Aconia Paulina, the priestess of Hecate and Isis,[2] breathed her last in her palace on the Esquiline,[3] Plutarch devoted a long essay to the discussion of the ritual, and the physical and moral significance of the worship of Isis and Osiris. This treatise shows the same spiritual and monotheistic tendency, the same elastic variety of physical and moral interpretation applied to the ancient myths, the same rejection of impure tales of the gods by a higher moral intuition, which are characteristic of the last efforts of pagan theology. Plutarch's many allegorical interpretations of the Egyptian myths may seem to a modern rather wearisome. But in a passage towards the end the very spirit of the *Phaedo* seems to emerge. Men are disturbed, says Plutarch,[4] when they are told, in veiled priestly allegory, that Osiris rules over the dead,

[1] *C.I.L.* vi. 1779.
[2] *Ib.* vi. 1780.
[3] Seeck's *Sym.* lxxxvi. n. 386.
[4] Plut. *de Is. et Osir.* § 78; cf. § 67.

by the thought that the holy and blessed God really dwells among the bodies of those who have passed away. "But He himself is far removed from earth, pure, stainless, and unpolluted by any nature that is liable to corruption and death. The spirits of men here below, encumbered by bodily affections, can have no intercourse with God, save only as by philosophic thought they may faintly touch Him as in a dream. But when they are released, and have passed into the world of the unseen, the pure, the passionless, this God shall be their guide and king, who depend on Him, and gaze with insatiable longing on that beauty which may not be spoken by the lips of man."

The higher devotional feeling which characterised the paganism of the educated class from the second century was, as we can see in the passage of Plutarch, accompanied by a decided tendency to monotheism. This movement was, as we shall discover, partly due to Platonic influences,[1] partly to the chaos of religions, in which a few of the more commanding and attractive absorbed or assimilated the rest, and drew men's minds to one or two great objects of devotion. Thus in the vision seen by Lucius, which we have described, Isis reveals herself as a universal Power, supreme, all-pervading, worshipped under many names.[2] "The Phrygians call me the Mother of the Gods at Pessinus; the Athenians Cecropian Minerva; I am Paphian Venus in Cyprus; Diana Dictynna to the archers of Crete, the Stygian Proserpine to the Sicilians; I am the ancient Ceres at Eleusis. To some I am Juno, to others Hecate. Only the Ethiopians and Arians, illumined by the sun's dawning light, and Egypt powerful in her ancient lore, honour me with the ritual proper to me, and call me by my true name, Queen Isis."

In the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius, a purely pagan work

[1] Réville, *Rel. unter den Sev.* p. 42. [2] Apul. *Met.* xi. c. 5.

of the first quarter of the fifth century, there is a passage which applies the same syncretism,[1] in rather a crude form, to sun-worship. "If," Praetextatus is made to say, "the sun is the ruler of the other lights of the heavens, and if these orbs control our destiny, the sun must then be the lord and author of all. The lesser deities are simply the various effects or potencies of this supreme power.[2] The names of the gods, whom we reverence, are only descriptions of different departments of His government, who gives life and order to the universe." And so one deity glides into another, as we find that his name or attribute is only, as it were, a ray of the light which "lighteth all men." Apollo is the great power who repels disease, and is hence called the "Healer."[3] And the identity of Apollo with the sun-god is proved by the epithets Loxias, Delius, Phoebus, Lycius, Nomius, or Pythius.[4] To take one example, the epithet Pythius, which carries in itself the myth of the slaughter of the Python,[5] merely describes the effects of the sun's rays on the mists of earth. Hence too Apollo is called Hecebolus, the Far-darting. By the same method, he is identified with Liber or Dionysus,[6] who is in the nocturnal hemisphere what Apollo is in the sphere of light. Indeed the very name Dionysus (Διὸς νοῦς) shows his identity with the sun, who is the *mens mundi*. Mercury again must be another name for the sun,[7] if only because, in works of art, Mercury is represented with wings, which indicate the velocity of light. So Aesculapius must be identified with Apollo,[8] because they have an equal claim to the sign of the serpent and to the

[1] Macrob. *Sat.* i. 17. This method of dealing with the myths of course is a very old one; cf. Cic. *de Nat. Deor.* ii. 23, 24, and S. Augustine's refutation, *de Civ. Dei*, iv. 11; cf. Lob. *Aglaoph.* i. p. 598.

[2] *Ib.* i. 17. 4, diversae virtutes solis nomina dis dederunt.

[3] *Ib.* i. 17, 14-16.

[4] *Ib.* i. 17, 31 *sqq.*

[5] *Ib.* i. 17, 50 *sqq.*

[6] *Ib.* i. 18, 1-15.

[7] *Ib.* i. 19, 1-10.

[8] *Ib.* i. 20, 1-5.

power of divination. Hercules,[4] the glory of Hera, the power of the air, is the valour of the gods who crushed the impious race that denied their divinity, The myths of Venus and Adonis,[2] Cybele and Attis,[3] Isis and Osiris, receive the same physical interpretation. In each case the myth is the imaginative expression for the facts of the changing seasons, or the sadness of the shortening days, or the gloom of winter. In each case we arrive once more at the central worship of the sun. Finally, the king of the gods,[4] who goes to visit the blameless Ethiopians, and on the twelfth day returns to Olympus, is plainly the sun in his diurnal course, whilst the gods who attend him are the stars which, in their rising and setting, follow the daily motion of the heavens.

For more than three centuries syncretism and the tendency to monotheism were in the air. It has been said of the pagan theology of the third century that it is one colossal syncretism.[5] Among the countless cults which found a centre in the Rome of the imperial period, there was no strife or repulsion. They rested on myth, the imaginative expression of men's feelings towards nature or the mystery of life and death, not on dogma. And the myths could be interpreted in many different ways. The age when each city and district had its peculiar gods, the sectarian age of heathendom, had passed away with the absorption of so many nationalities in a world-wide Empire. Travel or conquest had made the Romans acquainted with a host of new divinities whose attributes seemed to fill a gap in their own system, and whose ritual stimulated devotion or aesthetic sensibility. Men from the provinces flocked to Rome, bent on business, pleasure, or advancement, and prepared to reverence the gods of the imperial city. Julius

[1] Macrob. *Sat.* i. 20, 10.
[2] *Ib.* i. 21, 1.
[3] *Ib.* i. 21, 7 *sqq.*
[4] *Ib.* i. 23, 1.
[5] Réville, *Rel. unter den Sev.* p. 102.

Caesar found the deities of Gaul the same as those of Italy,[1] and the Gauls erected altars to Jupiter and Vulcan beside those of their own Esus and Tarvus and Nemausus, or combined the names of a native and a foreign deity as in that of Apollo-Belenus.[2] The Roman soldiers were the great apostles of syncretism. Prone as they were to superstition, exposed to constant danger on the march or in distant quarters, the ingrained Roman awe of the unknown divinity made them ready to invoke the help of the guardian gods of the regions where they found themselves, and innumerable inscriptions remain to attest the liberality of their faith or the blindness of their devotion.[3] The worship of each new god who attracted the Roman seemed another avenue of approach to that dim and awful Power, inaccessible Himself to human voice and thought, but revealed and adored in different manifestations of His will and attributes (*numina*). In truth, the old Roman religious spirit, which combined the most rigorous formalism with the personification of abstractions, to which no myth or dogma of any kind attached, lent itself better than any other to universal toleration. It invented genii for everything, for the city, the emperor, the guild, the camp, the legion, for every act, thought, or incident of human life.[4] Piety consisted in a scrupulous observance of the prescribed ceremonial,[5] not in definite beliefs or elevation of feeling. Many of its objects of devotion

[1] *De Bell. Gall.* vi. 17, deum maxime Mercurium colunt. . . . Post hunc Apollinem et Martem et Jovem et Minervam. De his eandem fere quam reliquae gentes habent opinionem.

[2] *C.I.L.* xii. 3070, Jovi et Nemauso; 4316, Herculi Ilunno Andosc; 3077; cf. viii. 9195. Jovi, Silvano, Mercurio, Saturno, etc., Diis Mauris; viii. 4578, Jovi, Junoni, Minervae, Soli Mithrae, Herculi, Marti, Mercurio, Genio loci, Diis Deabusque omnibus. Jupiter and Serapis are united, viii. 2629; Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Sol, Mithras, Hercules, Genius loci, viii. 4578; cf. Friedländer, iii. p. 444 *sqq.*

[3] *C.I.L.* viii. 2623, 2639-2641 (Dis Mauris), 9195, 8435, 8834 (Iemsal is a god's name).

[4] Réville, p. 41; Preller, p. 387; *C.I.L.* viii. 2529, 6945; xii. 1282.

[5] Cic. *de Nat. Deor.*, est enim pietas justitia adversum deos.

were mere names, and the same god could be addressed under many names, or under any name which pleased him.[1]

The Empire, by drawing together so many peoples with their peculiar worships, might seem to have produced a spiritual chaos. In reality the very multitude and variety of these religions, combined with the spiritual tendencies of the age, by comparison, assimilation, identification, to lead to unity. The old gods seemed to welcome alien worships, and borrowed their symbols and the ritual of their mysteries. Altars to many deities were gathered under one roof.[2] The worshipper was ready to accept from any cult what satisfied devout feeling or taste and fancy. Men made dedications to a host of deities of every clime.[3] They sought initiation in all the mysteries, those of the Eleusinian goddesses, of Isis, and Mithra.[4] They accumulated priesthoods in the most various cults. If different deities had similar symbols or functions, the tendency was to identify them, or to subordinate the less vigorous cults under one of greater popularity. The masses, by a blind instinct, sought from any quarter satisfaction for vague religious cravings, which become more and more imperious in the second and third centuries, for moral support and purification, for assurance of immortality. The cultivated and indifferent found pleasure and excitement in the splendour or novelty of foreign ritual,[5] as a modern sceptic may find an aesthetic pleasure in the ceremonial of the Mass. The general drift of serious minds was spiritually towards more personal relations with God, and intellectually towards a vague monotheism or pantheism. The many-coloured worships, which offered their symbolism to devotion, were, to some, clues to the

[1] *C.I.L.* vi. 110, 111.
[2] Luc. *de Syr. Dea*, 35.
[3] *C.I.L.* viii. 4578, 9195, 6955.
[4] *Ib.* vi. 504, 1779.
[5] Lamprid. *Com.* c. 9.

Great Mystery, to others, distant and indistinct adumbrations of it. The religious attitude of many devout pagans in the third and fourth centuries is probably described in a letter of Maximus,[1] a grammarian of Madaura, to S. Augustine, about the year 390. Maximus professes his sure and certain belief in one Supreme God, the great and glorious Father. His virtues, diffused throughout the universe, we adore under many names, since his proper name we know not. God belongs to all religions. And hence, while we address separate parts of Him in our various supplications, we are really worshipping the whole, under a thousand names in a harmonious discord. It was the task of the Neoplatonic philosophy to crystallise in its formulae the vague fluid instincts of the mass of men, and to try to find a secret harmony in the discord.

In the three centuries between Plutarch and Macrobius the great aim of philosophy is to reach the intellectual ground of truth underlying the crowd of worships which gave expression to the religious instinct of humanity, and faith in the Unseen. The father of this movement is the pious and cultivated sage of Chaeronea,[2] who is probably the highest and purest character ever produced in a heathen environment. He is in philosophy an eclectic Platonist; but he is really far more a moralist and theologian than a philosopher. He believes emphatically in one great, central Power,[3] who is sometimes spoken of, in Platonic language, as the Infinite God, sometimes as the Father of all, whose wisdom and providence controls the universe. Plutarch

[1] Aug. *Ep.* 16, equidem unum esse deum, summum, sine initio, sine prole naturae, ceu patrem magnum atque magnificum, quis tam demens, tam mente captus neget esse certissimum. Hujus nos virtutes per mundanum opus diffusos, multis vocabulis invocamus. This letter seems to render doubtful Dr. Bigg's denial of a real monotheistic tendency in the later paganism (*Neoplatonism*, pp. 52, 53).

[2] Réville, p. 112; Zeller, *Phil. der Gr.* 3rd part, pp. 141-182; cf. Bigg's *Neoplatonism*, pp. 88-91.

[3] *De Is. et Osir.* 67, 78; *de Sera Num. Vind.* 5, 18; cf. *de Pyth. Or.* 21; on the evil principle in the world v. *de Is.* 45.

has a horror of the superstition which fears the wrath of God, and of the atheism which denies His existence.[1] The gods worshipped by the various races of men are to Plutarch, as they are to Celsus and Maximus of Tyre, the subordinate representatives of the Supreme Governor, called by many names, honoured in many fashions, but all pointing the pious soul to the central object of devotion. In his doctrine of daemons Plutarch found a refuge for polytheistic worship, and an explanation of oracular inspiration. He is a distant progenitor of the Neoplatonism of the fourth century.

Neoplatonism was the great intellectual support of the pagan spirit in the last two centuries of the Empire. The germ of its doctrine was introduced into Rome in the time of the Antonines, and the force of that strange mixture of superstition with lofty speculation, which characterised the later Neoplatonism, was so enduring and intense that S. Augustine devoted to it some of the most powerful chapters of his *City of God*.[2] The rhetor, Apuleius, of Madaura, who had been initiated in all the mysteries,[3] and who posed as an apostle of Platonism, harangued great audiences both in Rome and the provinces, and fascinated them by a "Platonism half understood, mixed with fanciful Orientalism." Plotinus, the greatest of the Alexandrians, arrived in Rome in 244.[4] Crowds of senators, magistrates, and women of high rank came to listen to the obscure eloquence of the Egyptian mystic, who summoned them, in words which moved the admiration of S. Augustine, "to flee to the dear fatherland of souls, where the Father dwells."[5]

[1] But superstition, as degrading the character, he regards as the worse; cf. *Nec Posse Suav. Viv.* 20, 21. On Plutarch's belief in genii or daemons *v.* Gréard's *Morale de Plutarque*, pp. 299-304; Friedländer, iii. p. 430 *sqq.*; Bigg's *Neoplatonism*, p. 95.

[2] *De Civ. Dei*, viii. 14 *sqq.*; cf. *Ep.* 138, § 18.

[3] *Apol.* 55.

[4] Porph. *vit. Plotin.* c. 3, 7, 9.

[5] *De Civ. Dei*, ix. 17, ubi est illud Plotini, ubi ait: "Fugiendum est igitur ad carissimam patriam, et ibi pater, et ibi omnia."

The success of Plotinus was so great that he had a dream of obtaining a settlement from the Emperor Gallienus and founding a city in Campania, which should realise the ideal polity of Plato.[1] Porphyry, a Syrian, the greatest of his disciples, and a declared foe of Christianity, carried on his tradition into the first years of the fourth century. With Iamblichus the Neoplatonic system underwent a great change. It abandoned the detached and disinterested mysticism of its prime.[2] The persecution of Diocletian revealed the inextinguishable force of the Christian faith, and the danger of a religious revolution. The fate of the schools was involved in that of the temples. Philosophy threw itself without reserve into the conflict. The great Alexandrines, while ready to admit a kernel of truth under the husk of mythological symbols,[3] made no profession of religious faith in them. Their successors of the age of Julian sank the philosopher in the ardent devotee,[4] believed in sacrifice and divination, and practised magic and the theurgic arts. The idealist must always contract some stains when he descends into the arena of practical life. And Neoplatonism, while nerving paganism for its last battle, lost much of the moral purity and grandeur of Plotinus. Yet an unsympathetic critic may easily exaggerate the degradation; winking Madonnas and miracles of Lourdes will not blind a candid man to the better side of Catholicism. And we should not forget that, if Julian deluged the altars with the blood of victims,[5] and countenanced the superstitious absurdities of men like Maximus, he strove to correct vices in the pagan system infinitely worse than slavish superstition. A reactionary in one sense, he was also a daring

[1] Porph. *vit. Plotin.* c. 12.
[2] Bigg, *Neoplatonism*, p. 305.
[3] Cf. Plotin. *Ennead*, v. 8, 10; vi. 9, 9; v. 1, 7; iii. 6, 19; iii. 5, 8. For his cautious view of magic v. iv. 3, 11; cf. Porph. *de Abst.* ii. 41-43.
[4] Vacherot, *l'École d'Alex.* ii. p. 141.
[5] Amm. Marc. xxii. 12, 6.

innovator. It was no ordinary man who dreamt of regenerating the ancient worship by borrowing a dogmatic theology from Alexandria, an ecstatic devotion from Persia, a moral ideal from Galilee. Julian exerted his pontifical authority to elevate the priestly character and make it a pattern to the people.[1] The ministers of the gods were to be regular in their devotion, pure in mind and body, tender in relieving the poor and outcast. They are to avoid all tainted literature; they must never be seen in taverns and theatres; and they must exhort their flocks to be chaste, devout, and charitable. The worshippers of the Sun-king are to prepare themselves for the holy mysteries by fasting and contemplation. This heroic attempt to breathe a new life into paganism was doomed to failure. But it is a narrow and hide-bound criticism which refuses to see great qualities in the defender of a bad cause, and which will not admit that superstition may sometimes be united with lofty moral ideals.

The effort of Neoplatonic philosophy to save polytheism in the fourth century is a curious chapter in the history of opinion. In spite of some serious metaphysical differences, there might seem to be many affinities between Neoplatonism and Christianity in their common doctrine of the unity of God, and their moral and spiritual idealism. On the other hand, there might appear at first sight an irreconcilable opposition between the Hellenic cult of nature and sense, and a system the centre of which was the doctrine of the Infinite and Unknowable One. The explanation lies in the sympathetic attachment of religious and philosophic systems to their ancestry. Neoplatonism could no more forget its Hellenic origin than the Christian Church could forget its sources in the religion of Israel. The school of

[1] *Frag. Ep.* ed. Hertlein, vol. ii. p. 385 *sqq.*; *Ep.* 62; Duruy, vii. 341; Vacherot, ii. 165.

Alexandria, essentially eclectic and conservative, was bound by a continuous chain of thought and feeling to the whole past culture of Hellas, of which the greatest glory in art and letters was derived from Greek legend. Plato, their great master, while he claimed that the moral sense might correct the errors of licentious fancy, never abandoned the mythology of his race. He had used it, as he used the ancient Orphic traditions, to adorn or enforce his philosophic teaching.

Moreover, any system of philosophy which deserves the name must guard its freedom. Paganism had no rigid system of dogma. Formed by the rude superstitious fancy, and endlessly varied and glorified by the genius of poetry, the legends of Hellas belong to a totally different order of thought from the definitions of Christian councils. They were food for the imagination or emotions; they were never articles of faith. From the sixth century the greatest minds, Xenophanes,[1] Aeschylus,[2] Pindar,[3] Plato,[4] had treated them with great freedom of interpretation and criticism, and Euripides had, year after year at a great religious festival, for more than half a century exerted with impunity all the subtlety of his art to lower the dignity and dim the splendour of the great figures of Greek legend. But the Christianity of the fourth century was a system complete, well articulated, demanding entire submission of the reason. It would not treat with philosophy even on equal terms. Its truths must be accepted in the form in which generations of controversy and the decisions of councils had finally left them. If its dogmas did not square with philosophy, philosophy must yield. A system like the Neoplatonic, with its roots in the old world, whose best thought it strove to fuse into a whole, could not come to terms with an aggressive

[1] Athen. xi. 462, *Frag.* l. 21; cf. Ritter and Preller, *Hist. Phil.* p. 82.

[2] Aesch. *Agam.* 55, 160. See Prof. Murray's *Ancient Gk. Literature*, pp. 223, 224; cf. *Hellenica*, "Aeschylus," p. 16.

[3] Pind. *Ol.* i. 45-85.

[4] *Rep.* ii. p. 378; *Euthyphr.* c. 6.

religion which claimed the monopoly of truth. In not separating itself from paganism, while it strove to interpret the myths in a higher sense, the Neoplatonists were merely treading in the footsteps of their great master. Might it not be possible to find a niche for each of these countless gods in the temple of the inscrutable One?[1] Might not the popular religion, without any dangerous breach with the past, be reconciled with a pure theism? Might not a warm devotion and assiduous attention to the ancient ritual be found compatible with the ecstatic vision of God,[2] who is in Himself inaccessible to prayer or sacrifice, inconceivable by imagination or the highest effort of reason?

Neoplatonism had some advantages over Stoicism in the attempt to support or to restore the forces of paganism. Stoicism gave philosophic expression to the religious feeling of old Rome. But under the later Empire, as we have seen, the old gods had fallen into the shade, and cults of Eastern origin had acquired an extraordinary power and fascination. The tendency to monotheism in some of these systems was very marked; and the ascetic preparation for their mysteries, together with the ecstatic tone of devotion which they encouraged, had a certain attraction for the Pythagorean and Platonic schools. The Platonist Apuleius lived in an atmosphere of magic and mystery,[3] and in his travels sought initiation in all sorts of strange cults, which stimulated emotion, or promised glimpses of the unseen world. The later Alexandrians of the time of Julian found in sun-worship the highest symbol of their esoteric doctrine.[4]

But the great means of accommodation lay in the

[1] See the exposition of the treatise "De Mysteriis" in Vacherot, ii. p. 121 *sqq.*

[2] Vacherot, ii. p. 148.

[3] Apul. *Apol.* 55, sacrorum initia in Graecia participavi, multijuga sacra et plurimos ritus et varias cerimonias studio veri et officio erga deos didici; cf. Bigg's *Neoplatonism*, pp. 52 *sqq.*

[4] Zeller, *die Phil. der Gr.* iii. 2, p. 629; Julian, *Or.* iv. καὶ γάρ εἰμι τοῦ βασιλέως ὀπαδὸς Ἡλίου.

principle of emanation.[1] It enabled the Neoplatonist to bridge over the chasm between the one pure abstraction,[2] absolutely simple, not to be grasped by any act of thought nor described by any attribute, and the worlds of spirit and sense.[3] Each unity in the scale gives birth from its inner essence to another more complex, and therefore inferior. From the purely abstract One there is a graduated scale of being,[4] unity, mind, soul, the universe of sense, each successively engendered out of the inner essence of the higher and simpler form. Into such a system it was not hard to fit the gods of mythology.[5] It is true that there are wide differences between the earlier and later Neoplatonists in their attitude to the popular religion. Plotinus is much more of a philosopher than a theologian,[6] and while he tries to find a hidden meaning in the myths,[7] in an unsystematic way, he makes no allusion to theurgy, and deals rather ambiguously with the external forms of devotion.[8] So, too, Porphyry,[9] while his system enabled him to find a metaphysical content in legend, has no sympathy with the materialism of worship. He holds firmly that the Supreme cannot be approached by any avenue of sense, by sacrifice, or formal prayer. God is honoured most by reverent silence and purity of heart.[10] To become like and offer ourselves to Him is the acceptable sacrifice. But the Platonists of the fourth century are much more theologians than pure philosophers.[11] The whole forces of

[1] For the sense in which Plotinus held this *v.* Zeller, *die Phil. der Griech.* iii. 2, pp. 451-453.

[2] *Ib.* iii. 2, p. 454.

[3] *Ib.* iii. 2, p. 549.

[4] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* i. 17, 12, gives a simple statement of the doctrine of Plotinus; cf. Zeller, iii. 2, p. 453; *Ennead*, vi. 5, 4.

[5] See the elaborate system of Sallust in Vacherot, ii. p. 124; cf. Zeller, iii. 2, p. 557.

[6] Vacherot, ii. p. 108.

[7] Zeller, iii. 2, p. 560; *Ennead*, v. 1, 4, 7; v. 8, 13.

[8] Zeller, iii. pp. 562, 563; iii. 2, 563.

[9] Vacherot, ii. pp. 112-116; Zeller, iii. 2, pp. 599-601, where the doubts of Porphyry are expounded.

[10] *De Abstin.* ii. 34, διὰ δὲ σιγῆς καθαρᾶς καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτοῦ καθαρῶν ἐννοιῶν θρησκεύομεν αὐτόν.

[11] Vacherot, ii. p. 119, après Porphyre la philosophie embrasse sans réserve le polythéisme.

the ancient schools were gathered up and employed to give system and a rational basis to the old religion. The fictions of mythology were justified by the example of Nature,[1] who veils her secrets from the vulgar gaze. The Supreme One indeed, the fountain of being, must not be profaned by human fancy. But the lower powers may be dimly revealed to the multitude by allegory or fanciful tale.[2] The world itself is a great myth, which at once hides and reveals the mystery of the Divine. And the philosopher proceeds to classify the myths according to the nature of the inner truth which they contain.[3] Some convey the deepest theological, or, as we should say, metaphysical truth. For example, Saturn devouring his children is intelligence returning upon itself.[4] Others of these fictions are imaginative expressions of the facts of nature. Apollo slaying the Python is the sun drawing up the pestilential fogs of the marshes. The names of many deities are simply names of natural objects or powers.[5] Juno is the air, at once sister and wife of Jupiter, the lord of the upper sky. Isis is the earth, Osiris the sun, or the moist germ which fecundates. There is a hierarchy of gods[6] corresponding to the hierarchy of being, and to the faculties of the human soul. High above all is the Supreme One, the Good, to be approached only in ecstasy,[7] an effort of the soul far transcending any exertion of the highest reason, in which God is the object of an immediate vision or intuition, and the sense of personality is lost and swallowed up in the rapture of union with the Divine. Then there are the gods of the intelligible world, transcending the world of sense, and having no point of contact with it. Lower

[1] Vacherot, ii. p. 121.

[2] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* i. 2, 7-19, sciunt inimicam esse naturae apertam nudamque expositionem sui, etc. Cf. the views of Proclus in the fifth century, Zeller, iii. 2, p. 744.

[3] Zeller, iii. 2, p. 628; cf. Bigg's *Neoplatonism*, p. 306.

[4] Vacherot, ii. p. 122.

[5] *Ib.* ii. p. 123.

[6] *Ib.* ii. p. 126; Zeller, iii. 2, p. 628.

[7] *Ennead*, vi. 7, 34, 35.

in the scale there are the powers of the sensible universe, creating, life-giving, and preserving. Lastly there are the daemons and heroes,[1] more nearly akin to the world of sense, and acting as intermediaries between it and the sphere of pure intelligence, in which reside those powers, far above the region of the sensible, who cannot come to us, although, through the divine element in us, we may rise to them.

Between the pure mysticism of Plotinus and the fanaticism and superstition of the Neoplatonists of the fourth and fifth centuries, who justified or practised heathen sacrifices, divination, oracles, magic, and theurgy, there might seem to be an impassable gulf. But the great system, the centre of which was the unapproachable One, really contained the germs of the most thorough-going superstition that the world has probably ever seen. The theory of emanations necessarily involved a belief in secret sympathies and affinities, linking together all parts of the universe of being. Man himself, through his various faculties and capacities, is in touch with every link in the chain. If, by an almost superhuman effort, transcending any effort of the reason, he can rise in ecstasy to an immediate vision of the inscrutable One, he can also communicate with, and act upon, the lower powers and forms of existence. And he finds allies in the invisible world in the daemons, who mediate between the world of pure intelligence and the world of sense. Thus the Neoplatonists of the fourth century, having found a place in their system for the ancient gods, found no difficulty in communicating with them by prayer, oracle, or oblation, and even believed themselves capable of wielding the forces of nature. Committed from its origin to the old mythology, Neoplatonism in the last age abandoned the reserve of

[1] Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, viii. 14; cf. Vacherot, ii. p. 127; Zeller, iii. 2, p. 510; Friedlander, iii. p. 432.

its youth, adopted the whole pagan system, and, in an inevitable decline, lent even the forces of philosophy to deepen the superstition of the age. There is a certain sadness in thinking that Proclus,[1] the last great member of the school, a man of high intellect and almost saintly life, kept all the feast-days in the Egyptian calendar, and believed himself able to call down rain in a time of drought.

Yet it may be doubted whether, even in the last age of paganism, the purer and more elevating side of Neoplatonic speculation had lost all influence, and been completely obscured. We have seen evidence that there was an enlightened class who, while they refused to abandon the religion of their ancestors, were penetrated with the loftier conceptions of the divine nature, which for a thousand years Greek philosophy had kept before the minds of its disciples. Such men, repelled by the baser element in heathenism, yet bound by loyalty and old associations to the past, might readily accept a system which could reconcile a belief in the meaning and sanctity of ancient legend with a lofty moral tone and a faith in the Infinite Father. Fortunately we have preserved to us, among the débris of the fifth century, a book which shows that there were pagans who still drew from the system of Plotinus a real moral and spiritual support.

The commentary of Macrobius on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*[2] dates probably from the end of the first quarter of the fifth century. It is a curious mixture of old Roman feeling with the best results of Neoplatonic speculation.[3] It is a devotional treatise, with a certain tinge of mysticism. Yet here and there, in discourses of an ethical or mystical tone, we light upon purely physical or mathematical disquisitions which have a flavour of

[1] Zeller, *die Phil. der Gr.* iii. 2, p. 709; Bigg, pp. 319-321.

[2] It is best known as having preserved to us the *Somnium Scipionis* from bk. vi. of Cicero's *Republic*.

[3] On the philosophical and other sources of the work *v.* Jan, *Prol.* xi.

Pythagoreanism. From a contemplation of the heavenly reward awaiting virtue, we suddenly pass to a chapter on point, line, superficies, and solid,[1] and the manifold meaning, in man's life and destiny, of the number seven.[2] The Milky Way is the home of the blessed after death.[3] But it is apparently of equal interest to decide whether, according to Theophrastus, it is the juncture of two hemispheres, or whether Democritus is right in regarding it as a tract so thickly sown with stars that their intervals are obliterated, and they present a uniform luminous surface to the distant gazer. After a statement of the doctrine of emanation,[4] we are launched upon a discussion of the planetary motions and the order of the spheres.[5] The question of the influence of the heavenly bodies on human destiny is mixed up with calculations as to the relative size of the earth and the sun.[6] The moon marks the limit of air and ether, of the divine and the perishable; and in the next sentence we are reminded that our souls are of celestial origin, and that we are exiles here below.[7]

The book is a singular mixture of physics, morals, metaphysics. There is much which harmonises with the best Christian sentiment, side by side with cold statements of what we should regard as scientific theory, but which the author conceives as a theology.[8] Yet the main purpose is to fortify virtuous purpose by the prospect of the reward after death, and the contemplation of the divine origin and the divine destiny of the human soul. The dimensions of the sun and his orbit, the

[1] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* i. 5, 5.

[2] *Ib.* i. 6, 45, nam primo omnium hoc numero anima mundana generata est sicut Timaeus Platonis edocuit. For the references of Macrobius to this part of the *Timaeus* v. Grote's *Plato*, iii. p. 252 n.

[3] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* i. 15, 1-16.

[4] *Ib.* i. 17, 12.

[5] *Ib.* i. 18.

[6] *Ib.* i. 19, 19.

[7] *Ib.* i. 17; cf. i. 21, 34, ita animorum origo caelestis est sed lege temporalis hospitalitatis hic exulat.

[8] *Ib.* i. 14, 5, nunc qualiter nobis animus id est mens cum sideribus communis sit secundum theologos disseramus.

periods of the planetary revolutions, the position of the earth in the solar system, may seem to us subjects strangely out of place in a treatise apparently intended to stimulate devout feeling and virtuous conduct. We are conscious of a kind of chill in being asked to consider the relations of numbers, or the vast spaces between the heavenly spheres, side by side with lofty theories of our origin, and earthly discipline, and our future in another world. Yet the apparent incongruity may be explained. To Macrobius and his class the Mundus, with all its spheres, was divine, the efflux of the inscrutable Essence which, by successive stages of generation, was the source of the orbs of the sky, of the soul of man, of the meanest creature possessed of life. It needs an effort of sympathy and imagination to enter into the spirit of any outworn theology. To understand that expounded by Macrobius, you must look up into the depths of the heavens on a summer night, and try to believe that your particular spark of soul has travelled down to earth through all the spheres from its source in the divine ether, and that after its escape from the earthly prison-house it may return again to its distant birthplace.

The commentary on the *Dream of Scipio* enables one to understand how devout minds could even to the last remain attached to paganism. It presupposes rather than expounds the theology of Neoplatonism. Its chief motive is rather moral or devotional than speculative. The One, supreme, unapproachable, ineffable, residing in the highest heaven, is assumed as the source of mind and life,[1] penetrating all things, from the star in the highest ether to the lowest form of animal existence. The universe is God's temple, filled with His presence.[2] The unseen, inconceivable Author created from His

[1] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* i. 17, 12; cf. i. 14, 4.

[2] *Ib.* i. 14, 2. And he adds, what may remind us of some phrases of S. Paul, sciatque quisquis in usum templi hujus inducitur ritu sibi vivendum sacerdotis.

essence pure mind, in the likeness of Himself. In contact with matter,[1] mind degenerates and becomes soul. In the scale of being the moon marks the limit between the eternal and the perishable, and all below the moon is mortal and evanescent except the higher principle in man.[2] Passing from the divine world through the gate of Cancer,[3] mind descends gradually, in a fall from its original blessedness, through the seven spheres, and, in its passage, the divine and universal element assumes the various faculties which make up the composite nature of man. In Saturn it acquires the reasoning power, in Jupiter the practical and moral, in Mars the spirited, in Venus the sensual element. But in the process of descending into the body, the divine part suffers a sort of intoxication and oblivion of the world from which it comes,[4] in some cases deeper than in others. Thus the diffusion of soul among bodily forms is a kind of death; and the body is only a prison,[5] or rather a tomb, which cannot be quitted save by a second death, the death to sin and earthly passion.[6] The soul must not terminate its imprisonment in the flesh by any voluntary act, but purify itself, and await the appointed hour when its release will come. Suicide is not only rebellion against the Great Master,[7] it is also an act of passion, and the soul,[8] as Plotinus teaches, which quits this moral life with the soilure of sin upon it, falls into an abyss from which it may not rise again. Moreover, the heavenly reward is proportioned to the

[1] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* i. 14, 4-7.
[2] *Ib.* i. 14, 16.
[3] *Ib.* i. 12, 1; cf. Plotin. *Ennead*, iv. 3, 15.
[4] *Ib.* i. 12, 8, unde et comes ebrietatis oblivio illic animis incipit jam latenter obrepere.
[5] *Ib.* i. 10, 9. Cf. the Orphic phrase σῶμα τὸ σῆμα, Pl. *Crat.* 400 c; *Phaed.* 62 b. Virg. *Aen.* vi. 734.
[6] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* i. 13, 6, mori etiam dicitur cum anima adhuc in corpore constituta corporeas illecebras philosophia docente contemnit. This, however, is an old thought. Cf. Pl. *Phaed.* 67 d, τὸ μελέτημα τῶν φιλοσόφων λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος; Sen. *Ep.* 24, *ad fin.*
[7] *Ib.* i. 13, 8.
[8] *Ib.* i. 13, 9; cf. i. 13, 16

degree of perfection which we attain here below,[1] and therefore the mortal term should not be cut short while our probation is still incomplete, and so long as any improvement may be made. It is true that the soul should always strive to remember the source from which it sprang,[2] and regard the body as a sort of hell.[3] Degraded souls who have neglected their time of probation cling to the mortal element after death,[4] and, instead of ascending again to the divine world, are doomed to be imprisoned in brutish forms, and utterly forget their heavenly origin. The only hope of eternal happiness is virtue.[5] Scipio's dream promised eternal felicity to those who have protected, or saved, or aggrandised the state.[6] But there are higher degrees of virtue than that of the heroic and self-sacrificing citizen. While civic virtue moderates and controls the passions, the cleansing virtues may eradicate them,[7] the saintly and mystic virtues may attain to complete forgetfulness of their allurements, and, in a last victorious effort,[8] we may even rise to entire absorption in the Divine. Thus, though the good man will perform the duties of his earthly lot, he will realise that the earth is but a point in the infinitude of the universe,[9] that it is the sphere of the mortal and the transient, and he will be ready to turn an ear to any echo which recalls the eternal harmonies of the heavens.[10] Hence he will make light of glory,[11] and

[1] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* i. 13, 15, cum constet remunerationem animis illic esse tribuendam pro modo perfectionis ad quam in hac vita una quaeque pervenit . . .

[2] *Ib.* i. 9, 3.

[3] *Ib.* i. 10, 17.

[4] Cf. Pl. *Phaed.* 81 D, E; Zeller, iii. 2, 530.

[5] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* i. 8, 3, solae faciunt virtutes beatum.

[6] *Ib.* i. 4, 4.

[7] *Ib.* i. 8, 9, passiones ignorare non vincere ut nesciat irasci, cupiat nihil. How near this comes to the Christian ascetic ideal of that age.

[8] *Ib.* i. 8, 9. Cf. on the Neoplatonic ecstasy, Zeller, iii. 2, pp. 549, 745.

[9] *Ib.* i. 16, 6, (terra) quae tota puncti locum pro caeli magnitudine vix obtinet.

[10] *Ib.* ii. 3, 7, 11, quia in corpus defert memoriam musicae cujus in caelo fuit conscia. On the music of the spheres cf. *Ennead.* iv. 4, 8, μέλος ἂν ᾄσειαν ἐν φυσικῇ τινι ἁρμονίᾳ.

[11] *Ib.* ii. 10, 2.

aim only at the approval of conscience. For of this small spot in the universe, how small a part does our race possess! The fame of Rome has not passed beyond the Ganges or the Caucasus;[1] and the most splendid fame is but brief. Since all human tradition shows how short is the duration of any historic period. The universe may be eternal, but fire and flood, in regular alternations,[2] prevail and sweep into oblivion man and all his works, save in a few sheltered homes of immemorial culture, like Egypt, which maintain the continuity of the race. In this scene of mortality and short-lived hopes, the only wisdom is to nourish the hope of a life to come,[3] to do one's duty to the fatherland on earth,[4] while ever mindful of the true fatherland of souls, which is "eternal in the heavens."[5]

It may be said that the commentary on the *Dream of Scipio* represents the mysticism of a small circle of philosophic dreamers, and not a general state of moral feeling. And certainly the seeker for historical truth should not exaggerate the influence of ideals which in every age are the guide of only a minority. It is, however, an even graver fault to fix one's gaze on the baser side of past ages, and to ignore whatever there is of hope and promise in the slow and painful development of humanity. Such is not the habit of a sound and scrupulous historical spirit. Nor is it the attitude of a truly religious mind. It shows but little faith in the Father of all souls to believe that He consigns whole generations of His children merely to the worship of devils, without any glimpse of Himself, and to dwell on their blind aberrations of superstition in groping towards the light, and on their frantic

[1] Macrob. *Som. Scip.* ii. 10, 3.

[2] *Ib.* ii. 10, 9, res vero humanae ex parte maxima saepe occidunt manente mundo et rursus oriuntur vel eluvione vicissim vel exustione reclunte.

[3] *Ib.* ii. 12, 1.

[4] *Ib.* ii. 17.

[5] Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, ix. 17, illud Plotini ubi ait: "Fugiendum est igitur ad carissimam patriam, et ibi pater, et ibi omnia." Cf. Macrob. in *Som. Scip.* i. 9, 3.

efforts to calm the terrors and the longings which are inspired by the ineradicable faith in a world beyond the grave. Rather should we welcome indications that God never utterly forsakes the creatures of His hands, and that in the decay of ancient heathenism there was a moral and spiritual life, which was to be nourished in an unending future by the divine ideals of Galilee.

# BOOK II

## SKETCHES OF WESTERN SOCIETY FROM SYMMACHUS TO SIDONIUS

# CHAPTER I

## THE INDICTMENT OF HEATHEN AND CHRISTIAN MORALISTS

FEW inquiries should be more interesting than the attempt to form a conception of the inner tone and life of society in Western Europe on the eve of its collapse. Was society as corrupt and effete as it has been represented? Were its vices, as Salvianus insisted, the cause of the triumph of the barbarians? The judgment of the enthusiastic ascetic of Marseilles has been reproduced by successive generations of moralists and historians. The accusers have been vehement and pitiless. And hardly a word of direct self-defence and self-exculpation from all that crowd of stately nobles, keen dialecticians, and polished litterateurs, has come down to us. It is easy to frame such wholesale indictments against the silent generations of a long past age. It is not so easy to perform the more useful task of realising how they actually lived, and what answer, could they defend themselves, they might make to their accusers.

It is never safe to trust sweeping censure of the morals of a whole age or people. What a picture of our own time might be drawn by some acrid or enthusiastic moralist of the thirtieth century, who should dress up all the scandals of fashionable life hinted at in society journals, all the tales of ruin on the Turf, all the unsavoury revelations of our police courts and divorce courts, and present them to his readers as a fair sample of

the way in which the English people were living in the last years of the reign of Victoria! Yet this is the fashion in which satirists or moralists have treated the first century and the last of the society of the Empire. The satirist of the reign of Domitian has left us pictures of depravity and extravagant self-indulgence which are more revolting than anything in the pages of S. Jerome or Salvianus. If society at large had been half as corrupt as it is represented by Juvenal, it must have speedily perished of mere rottenness. Yet when Juvenal died the Roman world had entered on a period of almost unexampled peace and prosperity, a period of upright and beneficent administration and high public virtue, culminating in the reign of the saintly Marcus Aurelius. An intensity of devotion, hitherto strange to it, was giving a fresh life to Roman paganism. Philosophy was diffusing more spiritual conceptions of God, and a humaner charity in the relations of life. The inscriptions, the letters of the younger Pliny, and even the pages of Tacitus, as severe a moralist as Juvenal, reveal to us another world from that of the satirist, a world of severe and elevated virtue, in which the men and women sustain one another in adherence to high principle, in the pursuit of lofty ideals of public duty, or of literary and philosophical studies.[1] If we shudder at the enormities of Tigellinus and Messalina, we should always remember that the same age produced a Thrasea and a Corbulo, an Arria and a Paulina.

Roman satire was perhaps the strongest and most original department of Roman literature. But its judgments must be taken with a good deal of reserve. It was frank and outspoken about deeds of darkness, over which our more timorous delicacy is inclined to throw a veil. It was sometimes almost puritanical in its moral tone and the fierceness of its censures. The moralist represents the old Roman spirit, and draws his

[1] Duruy, *Hist. Rom.* v. pp. 662 *sqq.*; Boissier, *Rel. Rom.* ii. p. 195.

ideal from an age of simple habits before Rome was corrupted by the arts of Greece and the luxury of the conquered East.[1] He is apt to forget that luxury is not a synonym for vice, and that a softened tone need not imply effeminacy. He is still more apt to forget that a whole class should not be made responsible for the folly and intemperance of a few. He strikes at the monsters of vice, who will always appear so long as wealth and luxury abound, and he leaves the impression that these are not abnormal specimens, but types. He ignores[2] the mass of quiet good sense, wholesome feeling, and self-control, which in every age lies in shadow behind glaring and shameless profligacy. Above all, the very violence and bitterness with which the moralist lashes the vices of his time is a proof that his society is not so hopelessly corrupt as he depicts it. He is fighting for an ideal which cannot be a monopoly of his own. And when he laments the degeneracy of his contemporaries from the purer manners of a remote, and perhaps mythical, past, he is often only expressing personal contempt for the softer habits of increasing refinement, or else he is speaking as the organ of a quickened moral sense among the very men whom he judges so hardly.

The modern inquirer needs even greater caution in accepting contemporaneous judgments of the character of society in the fourth and fifth centuries than in the first. In the one case an age of splendid public virtue, of great material advancement, of higher moral ideals, succeeded an age which we are asked to believe was a period of selfishness, frivolous extravagance, and frantic and unbridled debauchery. The Empire was never so beneficent and so adored by its remote subjects[3] in many lands as it was under the sons and grandsons of the men who are repre-

[1] Cf. Friedländer, bk. iii. p. 15.

[2] Juv. xiii. 26.

[3] See the inscriptions laboriously collected on this subject in Fustel de Coulanges, *La Gaule Rom.* p. 177 *sqq.*

sented as the vilest of mankind. It was still proud and erect ten generations after Juvenal and the objects of his loathing were in their graves. But the fifth century closes the career of Rome in the West. The most spotless virtue, the most heroic energy, would have availed nothing against the forces which had undermined the civilisation of twelve hundred years. There can be little doubt that there were in the last pagan generation men who held a more spiritual creed, and had aspirations for a higher moral life, than their ancestors who conquered Carthage and Macedonia. But they represent a failing cause; they are the rere-guard of a retreating host, pressed hard by the victorious energy of the Church, which, conscious that the future belonged to it, was not always able to do justice to the *régime* which was passing away. It is so easy to attribute failure and calamity to moral causes; and Christian controversialists often failed to remember the Master's saying about those on whom the Tower of Siloam fell. Moreover, even within their own ranks, the new spirit of asceticism, which could find salvation only by fleeing from the world, and which, in the recoil from vice, set up a standard of superhuman virtue, was not always charitable in its judgments even of Christians, who, remaining in the world to bear its burdens, did not escape its stains. Thus that old society had not only to endure its own self-reproachful doubts and questionings in the face of ruin, but the fierce, intolerant criticism of the younger society, which could often forget its duty to the earthly commonwealth in the raptures of a mystic devotion, or in the effort to escape from temptations which may be as powerful in the wilderness as in the crowded city. And the anchoret who thundered against the vices of his age had been bred in the Roman schools. He had been nourished in his youth on Juvenal and Persius and Tacitus. If he had not all their literary skill, he had within him a fiercer hatred and

aversion for the sins and weaknesses of men than even Juvenal had felt. They were to him the natural offspring of the daemons of the old mythology,[1] who had, with hellish ingenuity, corrupted whatever of natural probity and goodness there was in the old Roman character. The Christian controversialist could do justice to the great, virile qualities of his remote ancestors who worshipped Jupiter and Venus.[2] He could hardly believe in the virtue of contemporaries who refused to accept the faith of Christ. The Christian controversialists undoubtedly did a great service to humanity when they held up to loathing the obscenities of the Floralia and the theatre, and the cruelties of the arena.[3] But it should be remembered that some of the better pagans looked with little approval on these corrupting displays.[4] Men will often rise above the level of a bad religion, just as they constantly fall below the standard of a good one. The severest censors of the morality of the fifth century are S. Jerome and Salvianus. And we shall see in the sequel that the heaviest condemnation of both falls on populations nominally Christian, or even on classes who professed to aspire to a peculiar sanctity of life. When we read these things we ask ourselves, Can the religion of the Cross have left men no better than it found them? And if we may reasonably distrust the unmeasured invective of a Christian writer against his co-religionists, there are even stronger grounds for hesitating to accept the judgment of an enemy, in a period of fierce controversy, on the moral state of heathendom. In this chapter we shall see what the accusers, whether heathen or Christian, have

[1] Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, viii. 14, 16, 22, vii. 33.

[2] *Ib.* ii. 13, i. 15. Cf. S. Jerome's *Ep.* 60, § 5, quid memorem Romanos duces quorum virtutes quasi quibusdam stellis Latinae micant historiae?

[3] Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, ii. 4, 27; Prudent. *c. Sym.* i. 378; cf. Tertull. *de Spectac.* 10, *Apol.* 38.

[4] Sen. *Ep.* 7 and 95; Juv. vi. 63; Amm. Marc. xxviii. 4, 29; xiv. 6, 26, 7, 3; Julian. *Fragm. Ep.* § 304 (Hertlein's ed. ii. 389); cf. Friedlander, ii. p. 243.

to allege, and then proceed to lay before the reader the actual facts of social life, which can be gathered from the literary remains of the century, extending from the reign of Gratian to the last years of the Western Empire.

The worst that a severe pagan moralist had to say of the moral character of society at the beginning of our period, may be gathered from Ammianus Marcellinus. He was born at Antioch, entered the army at an early age, and had seen great campaigns both in the East and West. He fought under Julian against the Alemanni, and he served in the expedition against the Persians in which that Emperor met his end. In his later years he settled down at Rome to compose a history extending from the principate of Nero to the death of Valens.[1] Ammianus was an honest, high-minded man of the old school. He adhered to the old religion of Rome, but his real creed was probably a vague monotheism with a more decided tendency to fatalism.[2] He could be fair to Christianity, and he evidently disapproved of Julian's exclusion of Christian teachers from the Schools.[3] Whether he is equally fair to Roman society may be questioned. He has the peculiar virtues of the military character along with its narrowness and hardness. A life of hardship spent on the Rhine and the Euphrates was not calculated to make a man a very indulgent, perhaps hardly even a just critic of the splendid, but luxurious and unwarlike society among which he found himself on his return to Rome. Ammianus has left two elaborate pictures of the society of the capital in his time.[4] What strikes a modern student most about them is that they might have been composed with equal truth in the reign of Nero or Domitian. The Roman noble has changed little in three hundred years. It does not

[1] Peter, *Die Geschichtl. Litt. über die Röm. Kaiserzeit*, ii. p. 121.
[2] Amm. Marc. xxiii. 5, 5.
[3] *Ib.* xxi. 16, 18; xxv. 4.
[4] *Ib.* iv. 6, 7; xxviii. 4.

surprise us to hear that the masters of the world are possessed of vast domains in every province, from the rising to the setting sun. Although they have no longer the political power of their ancestors, they have the vanity of a pampered caste, and they wish to prolong an inglorious name by gilded statues which commemorate nothing.[1] They ride through the streets in lofty carriages, adorned with a vulgar splendour of dress, which is not redeemed even by its ingenuity. In their progresses they are attended or preceded by an army of slaves, clients, and eunuchs. Their choicest pleasures are in swift horses, hurrying through the streets with the speed of the post on the great roads; or in long and elaborate banquets, at which the size and weight of fish or game are recorded, as in Juvenal's day,[2] as a matter of historical interest. Their libraries are opened as seldom as their funeral vaults, but they rave about music and theatrical performances. Hydraulic organs,[3] and lyres as large as carriages, minister to a degraded taste in music. In a time of famine, when all foreigners, including the professors of the liberal arts, were expelled from Rome, three thousand dancing girls with their teachers were allowed to remain. If the great man visited the public baths, he would salute effusively some slave of his vices, whom all decent people would avoid. His only friendships are those of the gaming table. If a respectable man from provincial parts ventures to call on the great personage, he is received at first with effusive civility. If the visit is repeated in all honest confidence, he will find that his very name and existence have been forgotten. The effeminate noble who takes a journey to visit a distant estate will plume himself on the effort as if he had performed the marches of an Alexander or a Caesar. He will order a slave to receive three hundred lashes for bringing him his hot water

[1] Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 44; Juv. viii. 1-20.
[2] Juv. iv. 129. [3] Cf. Sueton. *Ner.* c. 41.

late. These men, who have not a particle of religious belief, are the slaves of anile superstition. They will not bathe or breakfast or start on a journey till they have consulted the calendar to find the position of a planet.

The vulgar crowd of the days of Marcellinus is the same in character that it had been for four hundred years. *Duas tantum res anxius optat, Panem et circenses.* But it was even more pampered in the reign of Honorius than in the time of Juvenal. The emperors of the third century had added wine, oil, and pork to the dole of corn.[1] There can be little doubt that this mass of deserters from the ranks of honest industry, maintained in idleness by the State, was a hotbed of vice and corruption. All the social sewers drained into its depths. Magnificent baths, erected by successive emperors[2] from Nero to Diocletian, offered their spacious luxury at all hours of the day to the mongrel crew who bred and festered in the slums of the great capital of the world. The hours that were not spent in taverns and low haunts of debauchery were given to idle gossip about the favourites in the games and races.[3] The energy of the once sovereign people exploded in fierce wrangling as to the chances of rival charioteers on whose success the fate of the commonwealth seemed to depend. Probably the mob were never so innocently excited as when they were backing with hoarse cries their favourites in the race. The obscenities of pantomime, in which tales of abnormal depravity were reproduced to the life,[4] the slaughter and sufferings of the gladiatorial combats, gratified, if they could hardly intensify, the instincts of lust and cruelty in a populace which for centuries had been systematically corrupted by the State.

[1] Spart. *Sev.* 23; Lamprid. *Alex. Sev.* 26; Vop. *Aurel.* 48; Sym. *Ep.* x. 35; *C. Th.* xiv. 15, 3, xiv. tit. 17; cf. Marquardt, *Röm. Staatsverwaltung*, ii. p. 132.

[2] Lamprid. *Alex. Sev.* 25; Sym. *Ep.* x. 14; *C. Th.* xiv. 5 (*de Mancipibus Thermarum*).

[3] Amm. Marc. xiv. 6, 26; xviii. 4, 29-32.

[4] Suet. *Nero*, c. 12; Juv. vi. 63; Prudent. *Peristeph.* x. 221; Sidon. *Carm.* xxiii. 281; cf. Friedländer, ii. p. 285.

The picture of the Roman aristocrat given by Ammianus Marcellinus is certainly not a pleasant one. Yet it is not so dark as the pictures of upper class life in the days of Lucullus, or in the days of Nero. Nay, in many of its features it is hardly worse than might be drawn of English society in the reigns of George II. and George III. *Mutato nomine de te Fabula narratur.* The faults or vices which excited the disgust of the hardy veteran are those of an old society, rendered vain and effeminate by wealth, and served by an army of slaves, a society which was not sobered by any discipline of labour, nor elevated by public interests. We may also suspect that the description is to some extent coloured by the temperament and habits of the old soldier, whose life had been passed in frontier camps. An Indian veteran, who at the present day should settle in London, after thirty years' hard service, might not be more indulgent to our own luxurious classes. And Ammianus may have been wounded by the haughty indifference of one of the most exclusive castes that the world has ever seen. Worldly society is at no time very appreciative of unostentatious merit or service. And Ammianus probably knew the great world chiefly by the vulgarity and frivolity of its least estimable members. Had he been admitted to the circle of the Symmachi and Albini, he would hardly have accused a class, which regarded devotion to letters as the highest distinction of their order, of never entering their libraries. A darker, if not truer picture of that society in the years when Ammianus was composing his history is given by S. Jerome.

S. Jerome outlived Ammianus Marcellinus probably twenty years; but they must have been at Rome about the same time,—in the middle of the reign of Theodosius. The saint received his education under Donatus, probably in the reign of Julian; and, after visiting Gaul and the deserts of Syria, he returned to the capital at the time

when the Church was on the eve of its final victory. He was the secretary and intimate friend of Pope Damasus,[1] and for a time was one of the most influential ecclesiastics of Rome. He saw the inner life of the higher clergy, and of those great aristocratic houses, on which, since the visit of S. Athanasius, the ascetic ideal of the Christian life had cast its spell.[2] Jerome became the director in study and devotion of a remarkable group of women—Paula, Lea, Asella, Marcella, and many others, who were of the very cream of the Roman nobility, but who deliberately cut themselves off from worldly society, and in almost conventual seclusion devoted themselves to prayer and the study of the Scriptures.[3] Some of them were accomplished Greek and Hebrew scholars,[4] and, in their minute and careful study of the sacred books, they often taxed the erudition of the great scholar to reply to their curious questions.[5] We hear but little of their husbands and male relatives. The majority of the Roman Senate, even so late as the reign of Theodosius, was clearly pagan in sentiment,[6] if not in belief. There can be little doubt that the husband was often a cultivated sceptic or pagan, while his wife or sister was a Christian devotee. Moving in such a circle, S. Jerome must have acquired a thorough knowledge of the tone and *morale* of the upper class in that period of religious transition which has been described in the first chapter. His evidence as to the moral condition of his time would be invaluable if we could trust the coolness

[1] *Ep.* 123, § 10; cf. Collombet's *S. Jer.* i. p. 326.

[2] Hieron. *Ep.* 127, § 5; for the influence of S. Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, cf. S. Aug. *Conf.* viii. 6.

[3] Hieron. *Ep.* 127, § 7; cf. *Ep.* 24.

[4] *Ib.* 108, §§ 26, 28.

[5] *Ib.* 30, 34.

[6] The opposite view is founded on Prud. *c. Sym.* i. 566, and on the words in Ambros. *Ep.* 17, § 9, cum majore jam curia Christianorum numero sit referta. But, if so, why did they not attend and prevent the Senate from petitioning the Emperor? If Zosimus (v. 49) is to be believed, the Senate, even after the defeat of Eugenius, were still obdurate. Cf. Seeck's *Sym.* liv. and, for the opposite view, Rauschen, *Jahrbücher*, p. 119.

and fairness of his judgment as much as his knowledge. He was a tremendous and beneficent force in the cause of truth and purity, and he must always be regarded with reverence alike by the student and by the devout Christian. In his fearless determination to ascertain the precise meaning of the sacred text, he offers a splendid example of rare candour and patient industry. In his still more fearless denunciation of moral evil, even in the classes with whom he was most closely associated, and with the risk of ruin to his own reputation, he did a service to the cause of human progress of which the value can hardly be exaggerated.[1] But S. Jerome is a Roman satirist who is sometimes carried away by the love of startling effect and vivid phrase. He is also the ascetic, tortured by the consciousness of human frailty, and again almost intoxicated with the vision of God.

The views which S. Jerome held as to the ideal of virtue, and especially of sexual virtue, are of the extreme monastic type. To him, as to so many others in that day, the world is so full of allurements, the flesh is so weak and sensual, the devil is so cunning in laying snares for the soul, that the only chance of escape lies in absolute renunciation. The Greek ideal of moral perfection, as a middle state between excess and defect of passion, seems to the ascetic impracticable or unworthy. Avarice can only be conquered by selling all one's possessions and giving to the poor.[2] Luxury in dress and food must be replaced by sackcloth and herbs, and an avoidance of the

[1] *Ep.* 112, § 20; cf. *Ep.* 104; 57, § 7; 53, § 7, nec scire dignantur, quid Prophetae, quid Apostoli senserint: sed ad sensum incongrua aptant testimonia: quasi grande sit, et non vitiosissimum docendi genus, depravare sententias, et ad voluntatem suam Scripturam trahere repugnantem. In replying to a charge of favouring the heretical views of Origen, he announces a principle which, in theological controversy, is rarely obeyed: Nec bonis adversariorum, si honestum quid habuerint, detrahendum est, nec amicorum laudanda sunt vitia, *Ep.* 83, § 2. For S. Jerome's defence of his character, *v. Ep.* 45, § 2. For the secret of the bitterness with which he was assailed, *v.* Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. 9, § 4, oderunt eum clerici, quia vitam eorum insectatur et crimina.

[2] *Ep.* 108, § 19.

bath.[1] The pleasures of love, which are treated as merely sensual, must be utterly rejected as debasing to the elect soul. Honourable marriage ranks below the purity of intact virginity, and the recovered chastity of widowhood.[2] Nothing can exceed the extravagance with which S. Jerome, who was an experienced man of the world, celebrates the self-devotion of Demetrias to the virgin state. Her family, like so many others of the great Roman houses, had been ruined by the invasion of Alaric.[3] Rome had been given up to fire and sword. The fairest provinces were already overrun by the Sueves and Goths. The fame of a world-wide empire and civilisation, the splendid traditions and the hopes of senatorial houses of immemorial antiquity, were vanishing amid an agony of regret, all the more pathetic, because hardly a voice from it comes down to our ears. Yet the devotion of Demetrias to the virgin state, according to her eulogist, exalts her family to a higher pinnacle than its long line of consuls and prefects have ever reached; it is a consolation for a Rome in ashes; Italy puts off its mourning at the news; the villages in the farthest provinces are beside themselves with joy. Some of this is no doubt mere rhetoric, but it is the rhetoric of a man whose own passions had been conquered only by flight to the Syrian desert, by incessant vigils, by fasting and prayer.[4] And the whole letter to Eustochium, in which that well-known passage occurs, suggests other considerations which should be kept in view in reading the criticisms of ancient moralists on their own times. Probably every modern reader of that letter is lost in

[1] *Ep.* 107, §§ 9, 10; xxiii. § 2.

[2] *Ib.* 130, §§ 3, 5. Her father is felix morte sua qui non vidit patriam corruentem; immo felicior qui . . . nobilitatem insigniorem reddidit filiae perpetua castitate; cf. 22, § 19. The best passage is 123, § 11, sufficit tibi quod primum perdidisti virginitatis gradum, et per tertium venisti ad secundum, id est, per officium conjugale, ad viduitatis continentiam.

[3] The letter was written circ. 414.

[4] *Ep.* 22, § 7.

astonishment that it could have been possibly addressed by any man to a young woman belonging to one of the greatest families at Rome. It handles, without the slightest restraint or reserve, sins and temptations of the flesh to which we now hardly allude. It is absolutely inconceivable that any moralist or preacher of our times, however earnest or fanatical, should address a woman in such a style.[1] This is not said with any intention of depreciating S. Jerome, whose character emerged unstained from the fiercest ordeal of malignant calumny in his own time, and has borne the scrutiny of fifteen centuries. He would be a daring man who would charge S. Jerome with pruriency. But we may fairly say that the writer of the letter to Eustochium is likely to let us know the very worst of his generation, and that he will not throw the veil of conventional ignorance over deeds of darkness, which our more timorous delicacy has been accustomed, at any rate until lately, to treat as non-existent. Whether unflinching candour or studied reserve is the best tone to adopt with regard to moral evil, is a question which need not be discussed. But that difference of tone between the ancients and ourselves should never be forgotten in studying the character of a distant past. By keeping it in mind we may be saved alike from Pharisaism and from an ungenerous judgment of times which have made a self-revelation of which we should be incapable.

When we come to examine what S. Jerome has told us of the moral condition of his time, we are struck with the fact that his heaviest censure falls on those who, at least in name, had separated themselves from the world, the monks and the secular clergy of Rome. It is true that he consigns Praetextatus, the votary of Isis and Mithra, to outer darkness.[2] But Praetextatus is not

[1] *Ep.* 22, esp. §§ 7, 13.

[2] *Ib.* 23, 3, illa quem ante paucos dies dignitatum omnium culmina praecedebant . . . ad

condemned on moral grounds, but as the enthusiastic champion of the old gods. On the other hand, the pontiff Albinus, a staunch though tolerant pagan, is treated by Jerome with marked respect.[1] His unbelief is even made the subject of gentle raillery. His wife was a Christian. His daughter Laeta, who had succeeded in converting her young husband Toxotius, was a devotee after S. Jerome's heart. S. Jerome speaks of Albinus as "a candidate for the faith," and would have hopes that his little granddaughter's hymns to Christ, as she sits on the old man's knees, might win him from his errors. Another great magnate, Cerealis,[2] a man of the world, of great official distinction, wished to marry one of S. Jerome's ascetic friends. Nothing is said of the religious views of Cerealis, but the very silence on the subject probably shows that they were not very decided. Yet S. Jerome describes him as a man of spotless character. Olybrius, another member of the noble class, was probably a Christian, but like his father Probus, the great prefect, was probably not a very ardent one. Along with his brother Probinus, he was celebrated with all the pomp of pagan mythology by the poet Claudian. His virtues as a son, a husband, and a citizen are not less emphatically extolled in a letter of S. Jerome.[3] The saint professed to regard Rome as the mystic Babylon of the Apocalypse,[4] from which the true followers of Christ should flee to the desert, "blossoming with the flowers of Christ." Yet when we look for details, we find little in S. Jerome to

cujus interitum urbs universa commota est, nunc desolatus et nudus, non in lacteo caeli palatio, ut uxor mentitur infelix, sed in sordentibus tenebris continetur; cf. c. *Johann. Hierosol.* 8, miserabilis Praetextatus . . . homo sacrilegus, et idolorum cultor. The condemnation of Praetextatus is expressly on the ground of his heathen superstition. The inscriptions (*C.I.L.* 1779), in which he and his wife Aconia Fabia Paulina commemorate one another's virtues, reveal a religious enthusiasm which explains S. Jerome's bitterness; cf. Seeck's *Symmachus*, lxxxiii. on the whole career of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus.

[1] Hieron. *Ep.* 107, § 1.

[2] *Ib.* 127, § 2.

[3] *Ib.* 130, § 3; cf. Seeck's *Sym.* cv.; Claud. *Cons. Prob. et Olyb.*

[4] *Ib.* 46, § 11.

lead us to believe that the men of the great families, with whom Paula, Marcella, and Melania associated, fell below the moral standard of their ancestors or even below the level of worldly respectability in our own time.

Christian asceticism, however, like every other great movement which has disturbed the routine of life, had its *raison d'être*. There were serious perils to virtue in the household life of the fourth and fifth century, which S. Jerome has laid bare with an unsparing frankness, though probably also with some exaggeration. Among these the system of domestic slavery was the most fruitful of corruption.[1] In the days of Salvianus, as in the days of Horace, the attractive slave-girl too often was the easy prey of her master's lusts; and amours of this kind were regarded even in Christian families with a tolerance which astonishes modern sentiment.[2] Perhaps even more insidious was the influence of female slaves on their young mistresses. The attendants who surrounded the Roman lady at her elaborate toilet, and decked her out in her silks and jewels, were often not the safest companions for inexperienced innocence. Their class had often a bitter hatred of the Christian faith,[3] and spread the most malignant rumours about its professors. They flattered with the ease and familiarity of privileged favourites. The picture of the greed, lubricity, and spitefulness of this chattering crowd,[4] who surrounded the lady of noble rank, was probably a much-needed revelation of one of the worst cankers at the root of Roman society.

S. Jerome, like Ammianus Marcellinus, was disgusted with the display of wealth, which seems to have become more ostentatious and vulgar, as artistic skill and feeling decayed. But in S. Jerome's pages women are the great

[1] Hieron. *Ep.* 54, §§ 5, 6; cf. 107, § 4; cf. Wallon, *Hist. de l'Esclav.* ii. pp. 325 *sqq.*; Friedländer, i. p. 328.

[2] Paulinus Pellaeus, *Euch.* 166, contentus domus inlecebris famulantibus uti.

[3] Hieron. *Ep.* 54, § 5.

[4] *Ib.* 117, § 8.

offenders. Their gaudy turbans and elaborate coiffures, their costly silks and liberally applied cosmetics, and blazing wealth of jewels, are described with a scorn which makes the minute observation of detail somewhat surprising.[1] The saint often warns his female disciples against the danger of appearing among the fashionable and showy crowd.[2] The danger to female innocence seemed to him so great that the only safety for a woman lay in cutting herself off absolutely from the world. It is hard to believe that the reserve and delicacy of so many generations of social culture should have grown so helpless in the face of evil. And the warm imagination of S. Jerome has probably exaggerated the peril. If we may believe him, the curled and essenced fop was almost irresistible in those days.[3] A touch of his hand and a glance from his eye seem to have placed young women of rank and breeding at his mercy. There is probably better ground for the disgust with which the appearance of the fashionable matron in the streets is described.[4] She takes her airing in a litter surrounded by a great troop of slaves and eunuchs, and closely attended by some foppish major-domo or favourite domestic, whose pampered air and easy familiarity sometimes cast a shade of suspicion on his mistress's fair fame. But the great danger was the banquet. *Difficile inter epulas servatur pudicitia.*[5] It is hard for us now to realise that this should be true of a polished society with an ancient tradition of dignity. Yet S. Jerome, in his ardour for the ascetic life as the only path of salvation for frail humanity, places his ban on what we should regard as innocent enjoyment of a hospitable table. The description of the effects, on the hot blood of the south, of rich wines and delicate meats

[1] Hieron. *Ep.* 54, § 7; 108, § 15; 127, § 3.

[2] *Ib.* 130, § 18; 54, § 13; 107, § 7.

[3] *Ib.* 117, § 6, dabit tibi barbatulus quilibet manum, sustentabit lassam; et pressis digitis, aut tentabitur aut tentabit.

[4] *Ib.* 54, § 13.

[5] *Ib.* 117, § 6; 107, § 8.

in many courses, with the accompaniments of voluptuous music and suggestive dancing, may represent the tone of certain circles of his age. It would be certainly true of many in the time of Cicero. But it is difficult to believe that the high-minded, stately, and cultivated ladies, so many of whom are known to us,[1] had been exposed to the contamination of such grossness in their youth, or that they could not observe the limit between harmless natural enjoyment and sensual indulgence. The truth is that S. Jerome is not only a monk but an artist in words; and his horror of evil, his vivid imagination, and his passion for literary effect occasionally carry him beyond the region of sober fact. There was much to amend in the morals of the Roman world. But we must not take the leader of a great moral reformation as a cool and dispassionate observer.

About the time when this letter of S. Jerome was penned, Macrobius represents the leading members of the pagan aristocracy, Symmachus, Albinus, Flavianus, Praetextatus, as spending the days of the Saturnalia together. The mornings were given up to learned discussions on antiquarian and literary subjects. In the evening they met for lighter and gayer conversation at dinner; and our attention is expressly drawn to the elegant moderation of that day in food and drink, and to the banishment of the dancing girl and the buffoon from the banquet.[2] The evidence of Macrobius, who is writing without any *parti pris*, is worth at least as much as that of S. Jerome on such a point. And if such was the tone of the pagan aristocracy, can we believe that the great Christian houses would be more lax?

[1] Paula, Hieron. *Ep.* 108; Serena, Claudian. *Laus Serenae*; Fabia Aconia Paulina, *C.I.L.* vi. 1779; Blaesilla, Hieron. *Ep.* 39; Laeta, Zos. v. 39.

[2] Macrob. *Sat.* ii. 1, § 4; iii. 13. Compare with this S. Jerome's *Ep.* 117, § 6. Although Praetextatus is one of the party in the *Saturnalia*, the scene is laid in some year after his death in 385, as appears from the passage i. 1, § 5.

But if S. Jerome deals hardly with the vices of the worldly classes, he is perhaps even more merciless to those of the professedly strict and religious; and it is to the credit of his candour and sincerity that he lays bare with such an unsparing hand the corruption in Christian society, even in the inner circles of asceticism. In some of his descriptions of ecclesiastical worldliness and corruption the very spirit of Juvenal is upon him.[1] And his consuming zeal for a great cause probably made him less merciful to the failings of his own class than a man of the world would have been. Yet, after all allowances, the picture is not a pleasant one. We feel that we are far away from the simple, unworldly devotion of the freedmen and obscure toilers whose existence was hardly known to the great world before the age of the Antonines,[2] and who lived in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and in constant expectation of the coming of their Lord. The triumphant Church, which has brought paganism to its knees, is very different from the Church of the catacombs and the persecutions. The Bishop of Rome has become a great potentate surrounded by worldly pomp, and with a powerful voice in the councils of the State.[3] In the reign of Valentinian (367) the rival factions of Damasus and Ursinus had convulsed the city in their struggles for this splendid prize, and in one day one hundred and thirty-seven corpses were left on the pavement of one of the churches.[4] Ammianus Marcellinus, who describes the conflict, thinks it natural that men should so contend for the chance of being enriched by the offerings of Roman matrons, of riding in elegant apparel through the streets, and giving banquets of more than regal splendour. The pagan Praetextatus used to

[1] For the satiric vein in S. Jerome, cf. the sketch of Grunnius, the impotent critic, *Ep.* 125, § 18; and the great lady at S. Peter's Basilica, 22, § 32.

[2] Renan, *M. Aurèle*, p. 447; cf. pp. 55, 56; cf. Friedlander, iii. p. 533.

[3] Zos. v. 41.

[4] Amm. Marc. xxvii. 3, 12.

say jestingly to Pope Damasus, that he might be tempted to become a Christian by the prospect of being Bishop of Rome.[1]

Among all ranks of the clergy corruption prevailed. The evils of seduction and captation became so grave that, in an edict addressed to Pope Damasus,[2] the Emperor Valentinian I. sternly prohibited monks and ecclesiastics from entering the houses of widows or orphan wards, and made illegal both *donatio inter vivos* and testamentary bequests in favour of the Church. It may be doubted whether the law was strictly obeyed. The higher clergy generally seem to have lived in very un-evangelical worldly state and luxury.[3] They often entertained at sumptuous feasts great magistrates and prefects. The clerical epicure, brought up in a hovel and fed on milk and black bread in his boyhood,[4] develops an extraordinary delicacy of taste in his later years. He has the nicest judgment in fish and game, and the provinces are distinguished by their ability to satisfy his palate. Holy Orders become the passport to social distinction and dangerous influence. The doors of great houses opened readily to the elegant priest whose toilet was managed by a skilful valet. The clerical profession, so far from imposing restraint, furnished facilities for intrigue. The priest was admitted to the intimacy of superstitious women of the world, which was pleasant and lucrative, but perilous to virtue.[5] The supple and accomplished ecclesiastic has a great advantage among the crowd of morning callers on the rich young matron, who repays his flattering attentions with a present of whatever his covetous eyes have lighted on.[6] The passion for wealth invaded all ranks of the clergy. Many were

[1] Hieron. *c. Johann. Hierosol.* 8, solebat ludens beato papae Damaso dicere; facite me Romanae ecclesiae episcopum et ero protinus Christianus.

[2] *C. Th.* xvi. 2, 20.

[3] Hieron. *Ep.* 52, § 11; cf. Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. 21, 3.

[4] Hieron. *Ep.* 52, § 6.

[5] *Ib.* 52, § 5.

[6] *Ib.* 22, § 16, clerici ipsi . . . extenta manu, ut benedicere eos putes velle, pretia accipiunt salutandi; and § 28.

engaged in amassing fortunes in trade.[1] They will perform the most disgusting and menial offices for some heirless lady on her deathbed.[2] Even the monk in the Nitrian desert is infected with the universal contagion,[3] and piles up a secret hoard which his brethren are sorely troubled to dispose of at his death. If we believe S. Jerome, numbers of these clerical and monkish impostors became far richer than they could have been, if they had remained in the world.[4] They go about asking for alms to be distributed to the poor, but secretly enrich themselves; making a parade of their bare feet, black cloaks, and long unkempt hair, they creep into houses and "deceive silly women laden with sins." Pretending[5] to live in the greatest austerity, they spent their nights in secret feasting and sensuality.

The picture which S. Jerome draws of female society is so repulsive that we would gladly believe it to be exaggerated. But if the priesthood with its enormous influence was so corrupt, it is only too probable that it debased the sex which is always most under clerical influence. That clerical concubinage, under the pretence of the severest sanctity, was common, cannot be doubted by any one acquainted with the writers of the time. S. Jerome is perfectly explicit on the subject. Men and women, vowed to perpetual chastity, lived under the same roof,[6] brazening out the miserable imposture of

[1] Hieron. *Ep.* 52, § 5; 125, § 16, negotiatorem clericum, et ex inopi divitem, ex ignobili gloriosum, quasi quandam pestem fuge.

[2] *Ib.* 52, § 6; ipsi apponunt matulam, obsident lectum, purulentiam stomachi . . . manu propria suscipiunt. Pavent ad introitum medici trementibusque labiis an commodius habeant sciscitantur . . . simulataque laetitia mens intrinsecus avara torquetur.

[3] *Ib.* 22, § 33, centum solidos quos lino texendo acquisierat dereliquit, etc.

[4] *Ib.* 125, § 16, non victum et vestitum, quod Apostolus praecipit, sed majora quam saeculi homines emolumenta sectantes; *Ep.* 60, § 11, sint ditiores monachi quam fuerant saeculares.

[5] *Ib.* 22, § 28, et quasi longa jejunia, furtivis noctium cibis protrahunt.

[6] *Ib.* 22, § 14, eadem domo, uno cubiculo, saepe uno tenentur lectulo; cf. Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. 8, 4; i, 9, 4.

superhuman purity under impossible conditions. There is a curious letter of S. Jerome's to a young lady of position in Gaul,[1] written at the instance of her brother, which is a singular illustration of the union of superstition and licence. She makes a profession of leading a Christian life, yet she has separated from her mother, and has installed, as master of her house, a "brother" who is apparently, and is regarded by the neighbourhood, as equally master of her house and of her virtue.[2]

On a not much higher level are those virgins of the Church,[3] whose peculiar dress is their only title to the name which they disgrace, and who strut about the streets, nodding and leering. In many so-called Christian circles the gay, supple "virgin"[4] who would laugh at jests of doubtful freedom, and who had a relish for spiteful gossip, was much more popular than the "rough and rustic" person whose religion was not a fraud. Many other sketches of female character have been left us by the pencil of S. Jerome—the sot who justifies her love of wine with a profane jest,[5] the great lady puffed up by the honours of her house, and surrounded by a herd of sycophants, the great lady who passes through S. Peter's, attended by a crowd of eunuchs, doling out alms with equal parsimony and ostentation, and repulsing the importunate widow with blows.[6] Such scenes and characters, like those in the Sixth Satire of Juvenal, one would gladly believe to be brilliant and imaginative pictures of an exceptional degradation of character. If they represent anything like a general tone, it becomes

[1] Hieron. *Ep.* 117.

[2] *Ib.* 117, § 9.

[3] *Ib.* 117, § 7; xxii. 13, hae sunt quae per publicum notabiliter incedunt; et furtivis oculorum nutibus adolescentium greges post se trahunt.

[4] *Ib.* 22, § 24-29, ecce vere ancilla Christi, dicentes, ecce tota simplicitas. Non ut illa horrida, turpis, rusticana, terribilis, et quae ideo forsitan maritum non habuit, quia invenire non potuit.

[5] *Ep.* 22, § 13, ubi se mero ingurgitaverint, ebrietati sacrilegium copulantes: Absit ut ego me a Christi sanguine abstineam! Even worse precedes.

[6] *Ib.* 22, § 32.

easy to understand the exodus from the second Babylon, and the charm of the hermitage in the desert[1] "from which are drawn the stones whereof is builded the city of the Great King." It would seem that the Church, in conquering the citadel of the Empire, had lost the freshness and purity of its early days. It had vanquished the external power of heathenism; it had still to subdue the forces of corruption within its own pale. It is at all times hard for mediocre character to sincerely embrace a lofty ideal, and the spectacle of grovelling worldliness and materialism affecting the tone of an elevated spirituality is not unknown in later days. But in the fourth century there was found a remnant ready to sacrifice everything at the summons of an imperious faith. The members of the proudest houses sold all that they had, and turned their backs upon state and luxury, in order to spend the remainder of life in works of mercy and prayer. And in reading the letters of S. Jerome we should never forget that he is of that elect company, that he regards Roman society in the high light shining from the Cross, and that the Cross to him is not the mere symbol of a lightly held creed, but an imperious power, demanding a surrender of will and earthly passion as complete as the Great Sacrifice of all. The glory of that age is the number of those who were capable of such self-surrender; and an age should be judged by its ideals, not by the mediocrity of conventional religion masking worldly self-indulgence. This we have always with us; the other we have not always.

More than fifty years have passed away. The cataclysm of barbarism has fallen on the West. Provinces have been ravaged, splendid cities have been desolated, and the imperial power has been shaken to its

[1] *Ep.* 14, § 10, O desertum Christi floribus vernans, O solitudo in qua illi nascuntur lapides de quibus civitas magni regis extruitur.

base. S. Jerome, on the news of the earliest disasters reaching him, exclaimed, "The barbarians are strong through our vices."[1] And this is the text on which another great preacher calls the Roman world to recognise in their calamities the righteous punishment for their sins. Salvianus, a presbyter of Marseilles, must have seen almost the close of the fifth century.[2] Born probably at Cologne,[3] and educated in the School of Trèves, he had witnessed in his early youth the horrors of the great invasion which laid the cities of the Rhineland in ashes. From these troubles he sought refuge in the south of Gaul, where he lived in intimacy with some of the great bishops of the time,—S. Eucher and S. Hilarius, and the scholarly and ascetic society which made the Isle of Lérins its home. He is a man of keen sympathies and fiery temperament, full of the ascetic ideals of his time. He feels a burning indignation against the selfishness of the wealthy and official class, and an equally passionate pity for the poor and oppressed, which, had he lived in the nineteenth century, would certainly have made him a Socialist of the extremest type.[4] The thesis of the treatise entitled *de Gubernatione Dei* is very simple.[5] The unbelieving Epicureanism of the day saw in the calamities of Gaul only a proof of the indifference of the Deity to the fortunes of men.[6] Salvianus saw in them

[1] *Ep.* 60, § 17, nostris peccatis Barbari fortes sunt: nostris vitiis Romanus superatur exercitus.

[2] Gennad. *de Scrip. Eccl.* c. 67, vivit usque hodie in senectute bona. Gennadius was a contemporary of Pope Gelasius, to whom he sent the work quoted, *v.* c. 100. But for doubts about this section cf. Ebert, p. 447, n. 4.

[3] Salv. *Ep.* 1, adolescens quem ad vos misi Agrippinae captus est et de quo aliquid fortasse amplius dicerem, nisi propinquus meus esset.

[4] See *passim* the four books *ad Ecclesiam*, against avarice; cf. especially iii. 49, pauper beatitudinem emit mendacitate, dives supplicium facultate.

[5] The work was written after 439, for it mentions (vii. 40) the defeat of Litorius at Toulouse; and probably before 451, for the defeat of Attila by the Romans and Visigoths is not alluded to.

[6] The effect of the calamities in shaking men's faith in Providence may be seen in the poem *de Prov. Div.* (wrongly attributed to Prosper Aq.) vv. 25-85.

the clearest evidence of His providential government, punishing sin by leaving the sinner to the appropriate consequences of his misdeeds. The Roman world has deserved its fate by its injustice and oppression, its cupidity, its lack of hardy public spirit, its foul and universal licentiousness. Prefects and governors[1] have been venal and cruel; the minor officials have been even more so. The curiales, the governing order of the municipalities, have been so many tyrants, laying on and levying taxes of which the heaviest burden falls on those least able to bear them.[2] If, by imperial grace, these exactions are lightened, it is not the poor, but the richest class, who feel the relief.[3] Even those who have devoted themselves to a strict spiritual life are tainted by the universal contagion. They will be guilty of the grossest oppression when they get the chance.[4] If they have wealth they are as ready as the most cynical worldling to hoard their money instead of giving it to Christ's poor, and they will actually pretend that their sacred profession exempts them from the duty of such a sacrifice. They, wearing the dress of an ostentatious asceticism, will plead that Christ has no need of their gifts[5]—Christ, who is the universal Sufferer, whose infinite pity makes Him sharer in all the sufferings of His servants. Christ, exclaims the preacher in a passage of rhetorical power, is the most needy in the universe, because He feels the needs of all.

There can be little doubt that the hardened venality of the financial service, and the greed and rapacity of the

[1] *De Gub. Dei*, v. 25, iv. 21, vii. 91.

[2] *Ib.* v. 18, ubi non quot Curiales fuerint tot tyranni sunt?

[3] *Ib.* v. 35; cf. v. 30, decernunt potentes quod solvant pauperes. On the corruption of the curiales, see *C. Th.* xii. 1, 117; Sym. *Ep.* ix. 10; also *C. Th.* xiii. 10, 1, on the shifting of fiscal burdens from potentes by collusion of the Tabularii.

[4] *De Gub. Dei*, v. 51-56, licita non faciunt et illicita committunt; temperant a concubitu, non temperant a rapina.

[5] Salv. *ad Eccles.* iv. 22.

great landowners, were the vices which did most to undermine the fabric of Roman society. Of this we shall furnish, in a succeeding chapter, ample proofs from the Roman Code. But Salvianus, like some of the old Greek philosophers, regarded the love of pleasure as inevitably linked with the love of gold. The populations of the great towns, the men who were continually growing richer and more powerful by the impoverishment of their neighbours, were all alike sunk in the most abominable sensuality.[1] The theatre and the circus had been for five centuries the great corruptors of the Roman world. But in spite of the thunders of the Church, and the calamities of the times, these schools of cruelty and lust retained all their old fascination far into the fifth century.[2] Apollinaris Sidonius, about 460, describes, as still flourishing at Narbonne,[3] that degraded pantomime, in which the foulest tales of the old mythology were represented in speaking gesture. The games of the circus were held at Arles as late as 461, in honour of Majorian.[4] It is true that, owing to the growing poverty of the municipalities, these exhibitions had in many places ceased to be held; and a self-complacent optimism took credit for this as a sign of a higher moral tone.[5] But Salvianus ruthlessly exposes the pretence. The Roman character, he maintains, is still unaltered, but it no longer has the means of gratifying its base tastes. Wherever, as at Rome or Ravenna, the public amusements can still be kept up, the people will flock, as in old times, to witness them. The baptismal vow to renounce "all these works of the devil" is forgotten by a nominally Christian people. The churches are emptied, the holy mysteries of the altar are contemptuously deserted for the feverish excitement of the circus.

[1] On the corruption of Aquitaine, v. *de Gub. Dei*, vii. 16.

[2] *Ib.* vi. 49.

[3] *Carm.* xxiii. 283 *sqq.*

[4] Fauriel, *Hist. de la Gaule Rom.* i. 394; Chaix, *Apollin. Sid.* i. 135.

[5] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, vi. 49, 50.

Even the apparition of the invaders could not abate the rage of the populace for its accustomed indulgence. The Christians of Cirta and Carthage were cheering rival charioteers, or revelling in the turpitudes of the theatre, when their walls were surrounded by the Vandals.[1] Like the plague of Athens,[2] or the plague in the Middle Ages,[3] the disasters and confusion of the fifth century made men reckless and prone to frantic excesses. The leading citizens[4] of Trèves, a city which bore the first and fiercest onslaught of the invaders, and was four times, within a few years, given up to fire and sword, were revelling in a frenzy of drunken debauchery when the enemy were at their gates. Scenes such as these Salvianus had seen in his boyhood. They had burnt themselves into his memory, and the recollection of them accounts for the almost ferocious energy and persistent iteration with which he denounces the self-indulgence of his time.

But although we may believe that overwhelming disaster may have driven men here and there to drown their sorrow in wild and vicious excitement, it is difficult to credit the charge of universal and shameless immorality which Salvianus makes against the men of his province. That the slave-system is dangerous to the morals of the masters is the experience of all ages. But what is dangerous to some, need not be fatal to all. Yet Salvianus makes no exception in his impeachment of the morals of Southern Gaul. Every estate is a scene of prostitution.[5] Aquitaine is one vast *lupanar*. Conjugal

[1] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, vi. 69.

[2] Thuc. ii. 53, *πρῶτόν τε ἤρξε καὶ ἐς τἆλλα τῇ πόλει ἐπὶ πλέον ἀνομίας τὸ νόσημα.*

[3] Introd. to Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

[4] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, vi. 72. Salvianus seems to have witnessed some of these scenes with his own eyes (vidi ego ipse, etc.).

[5] *Ib.* vii. 16, quis potentum ac divitum non in luto libidinis vixit: pa-ne unum lupanar omnium vita. The conquest of Spain by the "imbelles Vandali" is accounted for solely by the immorality of the conquered (vii. 27). The sensuality of Roman Africa is described in even stronger language (vii. 70), video quasi

faithfulness is unknown. Except in the ranks of those who had taken the vow of renunciation, Salvianus will not allow the existence of a decent virtue. It is, of course, never possible to say how a whole population has lived; but this is equally true of the attack as of the defence of moral character. We can only form a hesitating judgment on the scanty evidence which has come down to us, and on general probability based on experience of human nature. The indictment of Salvianus cannot be reconciled with the contemporary picture of society which we have in the letters of Sidonius. And if Salvianus be accurate, the Church must have utterly failed in raising the mass of the Gallic people to a higher life. There must have been no mean between the small class who renounced fortune and family ties at the call of Christ, and the monsters of cruel rapacity and unbridled lust described by Salvianus. We know minutely the state of the society of Bordeaux[1] sixty years before the *de Gubernatione Dei* appeared. In the cultivated circle there, there is little trace of ardent Christian belief. Yet there is also little trace of shameless vice. The contemporary society of Symmachus at Rome was severely respectable, in spite of its pagan sympathies. If Aquitanian morals, in the time of Salvianus, were so thoroughly corrupt, then, in spite of the spiritual triumphs of S. Martin, in spite of the efforts of a highly organised church, ruled by many bishops of saintly character and great popular influence, the tone of provincial society must have fallen below the level of Ausonius and his friends, and of those grave and strict provincial senators who, ten generations before Ausonius, were regarded by Tacitus[2] as the salt of the Roman

saturientem vitiis civitatem . . . cunctis variis luxus maroore perditos. And again, vii. 75, quis in illo numero cum innumero exstus fuit?

[1] See c. 3 of this book.

[2] *Ann.* iii. 55, simul novi homines e municipiis et coloniis atque etiam provinciis in senatum adsumpti domesticam parsimoniam in-

world. Salvianus, like S. Jerome, judged the men of his time by a standard which might bear hardly on the most respectable societies of modern Christendom. Salvianus is essentially a preacher. But the preacher, from his vocation, and in proportion to his enthusiasm for righteousness, cannot be a dispassionate observer. His *raison d'être* is to edify, not to describe or analyse with historical accuracy. He will seldom refer to virtues already won; he will exaggerate faults which he wishes to eradicate; he will blacken even his own past to exalt the grace that has saved him; and he will be equally merciless to the sins of those whom he is striving to raise to a higher life. The society of Salvianus, while nominally Christian, was as little inclined as modern society to carry out in daily practice precepts which interfere with material success. The men who did so then lost caste, and were regarded by the polished and selfish world very much as Horace Walpole[1] would have treated an aristocratic friend who had turned Methodist. On the other hand, the man who has made the great renunciation is apt to treat the worldly class as worse than it really is. Its placid materialism, its bourgeois contempt for all ideal aims, irritate to madness the soul to whom death and the Great Judgment and the life to come are the only realities. The grosser sins of a small minority are regarded as the natural product of that absorption in the things of the perishing world which is the choice or the necessity of the mass of men at all times. But the monsters of depravity in every age are probably as rare as the paragons of saintly virtue. And we need not take too literally the *mot* of Salvianus that "the Roman world was laughing when it died."

tulerunt; cf. xvi. 5. The opinion which Tacitus held, as to the severity of morals in the provinces, is confirmed by the picture which Ausonius gives of his family circle in the *Parentalia*.

[1] H. Walpole's *Letters*, vol. iii p. 191 (to J. Chute).

## CHAPTER II

### THE SOCIETY OF Q. AURELIUS SYMMACHUS

In the preceding chapter we have reviewed the adverse judgments of some contemporary moralists on the state of society in the fourth and fifth centuries. But we fortunately possess, in the other literary remains of that age, materials for forming an estimate independent of either Christian or pagan censors. The letters of Q. Aurelius Symmachus,[1] the poems of Ausonius, and the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius reveal to us the life of the cultivated upper class, both in the capital and the provinces, in the years immediately preceding the first shock of the great invasions. The poems and voluminous correspondence of Apollinaris Sidonius form an invaluable storehouse of information as to the tone and habits of Gallo-Roman society, in the years when the last shadowy emperors were appearing and disappearing like puppets in rapid succession at the beck of a German master of the forces, and when a Visigothic government had been organised in Aquitaine. Symmachus and Macrobius, although they witnessed the final triumph of the Church, belonged to the ranks of that conservative paganism which made a last stand in defence of the old system of religion, and nourished their patriotic and

[1] Q. Aurel. Symmachus was probably born not long after 340, and died not long after 402 (Seeck, xliv.; cf. Peter, *Geschichtl. Litt.* i. 31). Apollinaris Sidonius was born about 430 (he was adolescens in the year 449, *Ep.* viii. 6), and was alive "three olympiads" after his consecration as bishop of Auvergne in 472 (*Ib.* ix. 12).

aristocratic pride with the dreams of a past that was gone for ever. Sidonius represents a society which, though obstinately Roman in culture and sentiment, had been nominally Christian for two generations, was living in close contact with the German invaders, and was becoming dimly conscious that the old order was passing away.

Q. Aurelius Symmachus belonged to a family which held a foremost place in the last quarter of the fourth century, but was not equal to some others in wealth and antiquity. His grandfather was consul in the reign of Constantine.[1] His father had been prefect of the city in the reign of Valentinian I., and, after holding all the high offices, still survived in the year 382. The line was prolonged through a succession of distinguished descendants. Symmachi appear in the Fasti as consuls in 446 and 485. A female descendant of the orator was the wife of the great Boethius, and the mother of the two consuls of 522.[2] Q. Aurelius Symmachus, the author of the letters, married a daughter of Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, who was Urban prefect in the reign of Constantius. He was trained in speaking, as so many young Romans of that age were, by a Gallic professor of rhetoric;[3] and in his early youth he formed a close friendship with the poet Ausonius at the court of Valentinian on the Rhine.[4] His earliest efforts in oratory were panegyrics on that Emperor, and on Gratian, delivered at Trèves during the campaigns against the Alemanni. The oratory of Symmachus was greatly admired by his contemporaries,[5] and he was repeatedly

[1] Seeck's *Sym.* xli. For the career of L. Aur. Avianius Symmachus see *C.I.L.* vi. 1698.

[2] Rusticiana, the wife of Boethius, bears the name of her great-great-grandmother, the wife of Q. Aurelius Symmachus; cf. the Stemma of the Symmachi in Seeck, xl.

[3] Sym. *Ep.* ix. 88.

[4] *Ib. Ep.* i. 32; Auson. *Ep.* xvii., dum in comitatu degimus ambo.

[5] He was entrusted with the choice of a professor of rhetoric for Milan; his choice fell on S. Augustine. Aug. *Conf.* v. c. 13, § 23; cf. Macrob. v. 1, 7; Prudent. *c. Sym.* i. 632.

selected to put before the Emperor the views of the Senate on questions of the day. His speech on the removal of the Altar of Victory is not unworthy of his fame, and has acquired additional interest from the replies of his kinsman Ambrose and the poet Prudentius.

The inscription[1] dedicated by Q. Fab. Memmius Symmachus to the memory of the great senator recites a long list of offices which he had held. He had been governor of several provinces, prefect of the city, pontiff and consul. He was admittedly the chief of the Senate. Yet probably no public man ever left behind him a collection of letters of so little general interest. In an age of great conflicts and great changes, it is startling to find Symmachus complaining to his correspondents of lack of matter.[2] Either the government was very reticent,[3] or Symmachus and his circle were very unobservant or careless of public affairs. The Senate was still treated by the emperors with ceremonious respect, and possessed many valuable privileges. But after the great reorganisation by Diocletian, it had ceased to have any share in the government. Like the consulship, it remained as one of those dignified fictions by which the Roman disguised the vastness of the change which separated him from the days of freedom. It was indeed part of the policy of Stilicho to consult and pay deference to the Senate, and in the troubled years of Alaric's invasions that body appeared more than once to exercise some independent authority. But these were only the illusions of a moment. Occasionally the Emperor condescended to send it a despatch, the arrival of which, to men like Symmachus, was an event of the first importance. That not a moment might be lost, the august body would sometimes be summoned before dawn

[1] *C.I.L.* vi. 1699.

[2] *Ep.* iii. 10; cf. ii. 35, at olim parentes etiam patrias negotia, quae nunc angusta vel nulla sunt, in familiares paginas conferebant.

[3] On this government monopoly of news v. Peter *Gesch. Litt.* i. 363.

to hear the formal words of some despatch which may have little deserved such eager haste.[1] To be chosen to read it to the assembled nobles was a coveted honour, and Symmachus, to whom the task often fell, is full of gratitude at being made the interpreter of the "divine words."[2] But all this was purely formal. Rome had long ceased to be the real seat of government. Not a single rescript in the time of Symmachus is dated from Rome. When Honorius paid his triumphal visit in 403, the palace of the Caesars at Rome had been practically deserted for a hundred years. While couriers were arriving day and night at Milan or Ravenna, and the imperial council were deliberating on the latest demands of Alaric, the Eternal City, the hearth of the Roman race, the home of its gods, in whose name the whole vast system was carried on, had almost as little influence on the course of government as Tibur or Praeneste. Now and then a feeling of neglect and desertion breaks out, as in the appeal of Claudian to the Emperor to return to his true home on the Palatine.[3] Occasionally the pride of the Senate is soothed, as when it was consulted about the war with Gildo.[4] Its hopes were roused for a moment when the barbarian conqueror raised Attalus to the purple.[5] But, as a rule, a dull, gray atmosphere seems to brood over the high society of Rome, and we cannot help wondering how men like Probus,[6] after governing provinces larger than any kingdom of modern Europe, could be content with the frigid dignity and the emptiness of their lives in the capital.

[1] Sym. *Ep.* i. 13, nondum caelo albente concurritur.

[2] *Ib.* i. 95. He asks Syagrius to thank the emperors "qui humanae voci divinas literas crediderunt."

[3] *De Sexto Cons. Honor.* 39, 53.

[4] Sym. *Ep.* iv. 5, of the year 397, consulti igitur in senatu more majorum, ingenti causae devotis sententiis satisfecimus.

[5] Zos. vi. 6, 7.

[6] Sex. Petr. Probus had been procons. of Africa, 357-58; praef. praet. of Italy, Illyria, and Africa, 368-76; of Gaul, 380; of Italy again, 383-84, and 387. *C.I.L.* vi. 1752, 1753.

The Senate no doubt was impotent and ill-informed. Yet the calm silence of Symmachus in the face of dangers and calamities, which must have struck the most unobservant, is very puzzling. It may be the proud reserve of the member of a great race, which will not hint, even in a confidential letter, that the commonwealth is in peril. It may be also that unshaken faith in the destiny of Rome which, only a few years after her capture by Alaric, inspired the last true poet of Rome to celebrate her beneficence and clemency, and to predict for her an unending sway.[1] The feeling was shared to some extent even by Christian writers like S. Augustine and Orosius.[2] There is a tendency on all sides to treat the menacing troubles of the time as only a passing cloud, as necessary incidents in an imperial career, not worse than Rome had often surmounted in past ages. Yet, in spite of these considerations, it is startling to read a letter from Symmachus to his son in the year 402, the year of the great battles of Pollentia and Verona, which makes no allusion to the invaders.[3] He confines himself to the bare announcement of the fact that, owing to the unsafe state of the roads, he has had to make a long detour in order to reach the Court at Milan.

There are a good many glimpses of the state of Rome during the anxious years of the Gildonic revolt. But we learn more from Claudian than from Symmachus about the meditated transfer of the African provinces to the Eastern Empire. Symmachus is concerned chiefly with the dignity of his order and the condition of the capital. It was a proud day when Stilicho had to report the opinion of the Senate on the conduct of Gildo,[4] and when *more majorum* the traitor was voted to be a public enemy. We have many illustrations of Claudian's com-

[1] Rutil. Namat. i. 47-140.
[2] Orosius, ii. 2, 6.
[3] Sym. *Ep.* vii. 13; cf. Seeck, lxiii. The detour was made by Ticinum, which lay on the west, to avoid the enemy coming from the east.
[4] Sym. *Ep.* iv. 5.

plaint,[1] "pascimur arbitrio Mauri." The African corn-ships ceased to reach Ostia with their wonted regularity, and the terror of famine spread among the mob of Rome.[2] The masses were becoming sullen and dangerous. There were all the signs of a coming storm. Numbers of the higher families were flying to the safe seclusion of their country seats, and Symmachus prepared to send away his children from the capital.[3] As the chief author of the condemnation of Gildo, he had himself to withdraw for a while to one of his villas.[4] The distress was temporarily relieved by an *oblatio* of twenty days' supplies made by the Senate.[5] And again Symmachus describes the delight with which, from his villa on the Tiber, he saw the corn fleet from Macedonia arrive.[6] But there are few indications that he realised the grave social and economic dangers which are revealed by the Theodosian Code. He once casually mentions that he is debarred from the enjoyment of his country seat by the prevalence of brigandage.[7] There is a slight touch of feeling in a reference to the gloomy appearance of the country which met his eyes in one of his excursions.[8] Yet one would never gather from the passage that hundreds of thousands of acres in once smiling districts had returned to waste. The letters of Symmachus, if they had told us more of public events,[9] might have been among the most precious documents in historical literature. As it is, their chief value lies in what they rather stintedly reveal of the life and tone of the class to which Symmachus belonged. Here we see it for the last time apparently secure in the possession of enormous wealth, great administrative power, and exquisite social culture, seem-

[1] *De Bell. Gildon.* v. 70.
[2] Sym. *Ep.* vi. 14; cf. vi. 18, ii. 6.
[3] *Ib.* vi. 26, 66, 21.
[4] *Ib.* vi. 66.
[5] *Ib.* vi. 12, 26.
[6] *Ib.* iii. 55, 82.
[7] *Ib.* ii. 22, sed nunc intuta est latrociniis suburbanitas.
[8] *Ib.* v. 12.
[9] It should be said that he appears to have appended to some of his letters a separate bulletin, containing the news of the day; cf. *Ep.* ii. 25.

ingly without a thought of the storm which was about to break.

The senatorial order was essentially a wealthy class It had come to include nearly all the considerable proprietors in Italy and the provinces.[1] And, as we shall see in another chapter, the wealth and social power of its members were increasing as what may be called the middle class (the *curiales*) rapidly declined in numbers and pecuniary independence. Of course there were many degrees of opulence in the ranks of the senators. That some were comparatively poor is evident from the fact that a certain number were relieved of the full weight of imperial imposts.[2] But we have express testimony, apart from indirect evidence, that the wealth of others was enormous.[3] A senatorial income of the highest class, exclusive of what was derived from the estates in kind, sometimes reached the sum of £180,000,[4] and that at a time when the ordinary rate of interest was 12 per cent. More moderate incomes, such as that of Symmachus, amounted to £60,000 a year. Symmachus had at least three great houses in Rome or the suburbs, and fifteen country seats in various districts of Italy.[5] He had large estates in Samnium, Apulia, and Mauretania. The tenure of a great office in the provinces gave a man the chance of acquiring such domains. Ammianus Marcellinus speaks of the estates of Sex. Petron. Probus as scattered all over the Empire,[6] and he broadly hints that

[1] Zos. ii. 38; cf. Duruy, vii. p. 176, and Godefroy's Paratitlon to *C. Th.* vi. tit. ii.

[2] *C. Th.* vi. 2, 4, 8.

[3] Olympiod. *ap. Phot.* § 44 (Müll. *Frag. Hist. Gr.* iv.).

[4] Marq. *Röm. Alt.* ii. p. 55; cf. Duruy, v. p. 598, on the fortunes of the earlier Empire. Pallas, the freedman of Claudius' reign, had 300,000,000 sesterces = £3,200,000, cf. Friedländer, i. p. 192.

[5] For the various seats of Symmachus v. Seeck, xlvi.; some may have come to him by his wife from Orfitus, *ib.* l.

[6] Amm. Marc. xxvii. 11, 1, opum amplitudine cognitus orbi Romano, per quem universum paene patrimonia sparsa possedit, juste an secus non judicioli est nostri. Pliny (*H. N.* xviii. 35) alleges that half of Roman Africa was owned by six persons. For a description of such an estate v. Boissier, *L'Afr. Rom.* p. 150.

that great noble had not always acquired them by the fairest means. The elder Sallustius, when he was vicarius of Spain about 364,[1] probably acquired the property in that province which his son enjoyed a generation later, in the time of Symmachus. The wealth of Paula, who abandoned it all to accompany S. Jerome to Bethlehem, of S. Paulinus,[2] and many others of the Roman nobility, is known to us from Christian sources.

The fervour of asceticism may have led S. Jerome to overdraw his picture of Roman luxury. But there is one department of expenditure in which the letters of Symmachus reveal an almost reckless profusion. The praetorship, which every young senator of the highest class had to assume,[3] was one of the heaviest burdens on the senatorial class, so heavy that some of them preferred to resign their order rather than undertake it. It had, like the consulship, long ceased to confer any power or authority. It remained as a disguised form of taxation for the pleasures of the mob of the capital. The younger Symmachus was still a mere boy in the hands of a tutor, when he was designated for this expensive honour of amusing the rabble of Rome. The games which the young praetor had to provide cost his father a sum equal to £90,000 of our money.[4] So far from complaining of the expense, his father is eager to seize the opportunity

[1] *C.I.L.* vi. 1729. The monument records the gratitude and admiration of the Spaniards. It is dated in the consulship of Jovianus Aug. and Varronianus (364). Flav. Sallustius had been cons. ord. in 363, and praet. praef. 361-3; cf. Amm. Marc. xxi. 8, 1.; Sym. *Ep.* v. 56. The herds of horses referred to were on the Spanish estates, Seeck, clvi.; cf. Sym. *Ep.* ix. 12.

[2] The wealth of Paulinus is alluded to in Aus. *Ep.* xxiv. 115:

ne sparsam raptamque domum laceratque centum
per dominos veteris Paullini regna fleamus.

His wife Therasia was enormously wealthy, v. Greg. Tur. *de Glor. Conf.* 107. On the wealth of Paula v. Hieron. *Ep.* 108, § 5.

[3] *C. Th.* vi. tit. iv. with the Para titlon.

[4] Seeck, xlvi. Probus, shortly after the death of Honorius, in spite of the enormous losses caused by the Gothic invasion, is said to have expended £54,000 on a similar occasion. Maximus spent £180,000. Olympiod. § 44; cf. Friedlander, ii. p. 21.

of gaining popularity with the crowd,[1] and rejects with scorn any idea of parsimony. His time and energies are devoted for several years to the preparations for the spectacle which is to usher his son into the career of public life. Symmachus, in everything a devotee of the past,[2] was nowhere more conservative than in his belief in the ancient games. He had put aside the conventional tone of servility in demanding from the reluctant Theodosius the performance of what he regarded as an imperious duty to the commonwealth.[3] But when the occasion arrived he was ready to act up to his own principles. Many of his letters are full of the coming games. He appeals to his friends in all parts of the world to assist him. Lions and crocodiles from Africa, dogs from Scotland, horses from the famous studs of Spain, are all sought for, and the most anxious provision is made for their conveyance from these distant regions.[4] The gladiatorial shows had not yet been suppressed by Christian sentiment, and Symmachus was determined to have a band of Saxons,[5] to crown the success of his games. He puts as much seriousness into the business as if it affected the very existence of the State.[6] His anxiety is overpowering. In spite, however, of all his care and profusion, there were many accidents and disappointments. Some of the animals arrived half dead from the hardships of their long journey. Many of the splendid Spanish coursers had either perished by the way, or were hopelessly disabled.[7] The crocodiles would not eat and had to be killed. Chariot-drivers and players, expected from Sicily, were, in spite of all searches along the coast,

[1] Sym. *Ep.* ii. 78. Cf. ix. 126; ii. 78.

[2] For an example of his conservatism v. ii. 36, opposing a decision of the pontifical college to allow the Vestals to erect a statue to Praetextatus.

[3] *Ib. Rel.* 6, beneficia numinis vestri populus Romanus expectat . . . sed ea jam quasi debita repetit quae aeternitas vestra sponte promisit. Cf. *Rel.* 9.

[4] *Ep.* iv. 58-60, 63; ix. 12; ii. 76; ii. 77; ix. 132.

[5] *Ib.* ii. 46.

[6] *Ib.* iv. 8, 60.

[7] *Ib.* v. 56.

nowhere to be heard of.[1] The most cruel blow of all was the loss of the Saxon gladiators, who, declining to make sport for the rabble of Rome, strangled one another before the hour of their humiliation in the arena arrived.[2]

This is the most interesting passage in the life of Symmachus as revealed in his letters. The world he belongs to was the slave of old tradition and conventionality, and, with all its splendour, must have suffered from *ennui*. The great man's day, just as in Pliny's time, was filled by a round of trivial social observances, which were as engrossing and as obligatory as serious duties.[3] The crowd of morning callers and dependants had to be received as of old. All the anniversaries in the families of friends had to be duly remembered and honoured. If a friend obtained from the Emperor the distinction of one of the old republican magistracies, it was an imperative social duty to attend his inauguration.[4] The service of the Sacred Colleges was another social obligation,[5] although Symmachus hints broadly that some of his colleagues in the pontifical college were inclined to flatter the Court by absenting themselves;[6] and even Flavianus and Praetextatus, who were pagans of the pagans, sometimes excused themselves by absence at their country seats or at some pleasure resort in Campania.[7] In nothing were the demands of etiquette more imperious than in letter-writing. Again and again Symmachus recalls the rule of "old-fashioned manners," that the friend who goes from home should be the first to write.[8] It matters not whether he has any-

[1] *Ep.* vi. 42.
[2] *Ib.* ii. 46.
[3] Two generations later than Symmachus, Sidonius, describing high society at Rome, says, utrumque quidem, si fors Laribus egrediebantur, artabat clientum praevia pedisequa circumfusa populositas, Sid. *Ep.* i. 9, 3.
[4] Sym. *Ep.* i. 101.
[5] *Ib.* i. 47, 48.
[6] *Ib.* i. 51, nunc aris deesse Romanos genus est ambiendi.
[7] *Ib.* i. 47, 51; ii. 53, mihi tuum munus injungis: fruere deliciis copiosis; nos mandata curabimus.
[8] *Ib.* vi. 60.

thing to say. Indeed, it is hard to see why a great many of these letters should have been written at all. They are about as interesting as a visiting card, and seem to have had no more significance than a polite attention. The stiffness of etiquette, which was introduced into official life by Diocletian, and which invaded the legal style of the imperial rescripts, reigns in the correspondence of the period, even between near relations. The conservatism of Symmachus, indeed, revolts against the new-fangled habit of prefixing titles to a friend's name in a familiar letter.[1] Still, his own son is "amabilitas tua,"[2] and his daughter "domina filia." That there were warm affections and a kindly unselfish nature behind all this artificial stiffness in the case of Symmachus we shall see afterwards. With him and his caste the habit of social observance, however complicated and engrossing, had become a second nature, without always freezing the springs of natural kindliness.

Yet the cold dignity of the life in those palaces on the Caelian and Aventine, with its endless calls to frivolous social duties, and its monotony of busy idleness, must have grown irksome at times. It was not, perhaps, altogether the coolness of Praeneste, the gay abandon of Baiae, or the boar-hunting in the woods of Laurentum, that tempted the fashionable world away from the attractions of Rome. Symmachus loves Rome, with all its turbulence, even in times of scarcity and tumult, and he will linger in a suburban villa[3] on the chance of being summoned to a meeting of the Senate; but even he feels the need of repose and emancipation from the tyranny of society. At one of his country houses, he is as happy as such a stately self-contained man will ever show himself, looking after the making of

[1] Sym. *Ep.* iv. 30, itaneepistularum nostrarum simplex usus interiit, ut paginis tuis lenocinia aevi praesentis anteferas? redeamus quin ergo ad infucatos nominum titulos.

[2] *Ib.* vii. 6, vi. 60, 80; cf Ruric. *Ep.* i. 6, 7, 10, 11, 13.

[3] *Ep.* ii. 57, vii. 21.

his oil and wine, laying down a fresh mosaic, receiving a friend or two, or drinking in the quiet freshness of the Laurentine woods that overhang the sea.[1] There is no trace in his letters that nature has for him[2] any of the romantic charm which it had for Ausonius and Rutilius. He was not much of a sportsman even in his youth. He loved the country for its stillness and repose, for the relief it gave from the monotonous strain of social duty which was doubly oppressive to his kind and conscientious nature. Above all, it gave him leisure for converse with the old favourites of his library.

Among the best men of the pagan or semi-pagan aristocracy of that time the passion for literature or erudition was absorbing. With many of them it took the place of interest in public affairs. The company whom Macrobius brings together in his *Saturnalia* were the leaders of Roman society—Praetextatus, Flavianus, two members of the great house of the Albini, Symmachus himself. They are joined by other guests of lower social rank, but equals in the literary brotherhood, Eustathius, a Greek professor of rhetoric, and Servius, the prince of Roman critics. Praetextatus, the arch-hierophant, initiated in all the cults of Syria and Egypt, is the exponent of priestly lore. Flavianus is the master of that augural art which led him to his doom when he espoused the cause of Eugenius and paganism against the Church. The Albini enlarge on the antiquarian exactness of Virgil.[3] There was no originality in the literary enthusiasm of these men. It was an enthusiasm which spent its force in preserving and appreciating what the ages of creation and inspiration had left behind.[4] Prae-

[1] *Ep.* ii. 26; iii. 23, nunc hic in otio rusticamur et multimodis autumnitate defruimur; vii. 31; vii. 15, 18; vi. 44.

[2] *Ib.* v. 78, agri quiete delector . . . saepe oculos pasco culturis; cf. Plin. *Ep.* i. 9; Friedländer, ii. p. 112 *sqq.*

[3] Macrob. i. 17, 1; i. 24, 17-19.

[4] On the tastes and learned labours of this circle cf. Peter, *Gesch. Litt. über die Röm. Kaiserzeit*, i. p. 137; Jan, *Prol. ad Macrob.* xxii. *sqq.*

textatus, besides giving much attention to the emendation of the classics, translated the *Analytics* of Aristotle.[1] Flavianus was an erudite historian, and composed a volume of *Annals*[2] dedicated to Theodosius. His translation of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by Philostratus was in vogue in the time of Sidonius, and fragments of his *de Dogmatibus Philosophorum* were still read in the Middle Ages.[3] Sallustius, another great person of the circle of Symmachus, is known to have emended the text of Apuleius.[4] A great noble in Spain, who had a famous stud, from which Symmachus drew a contribution for his son's games, seems to have combined in a rare fashion a taste for horse-breeding with a taste for literature, and begs the orator for a copy of his speeches.[5] Symmachus had many literary friends in Gaul, most of them mere names to us now. Among them were three brothers[6] who had been trained in the great school of Trèves. One of them had the honour of receiving the dedication of Claudian's *Rape of Proserpine*.[7] Another, Protadius, affects a great taste for sport, but is really a litterateur, with an ambition to write the history of his province. Symmachus, in his friendly way, helped him with advice and some materials from his library.[8] If the history of Protadius was ever written, it shared the fate of many another work of that age of which the cruelty or contempt of time has not left even a trace. There was no doubt much vanity and love of mutual admiration under all this literary activity. But in our own day the apotheosis of self-advertising mediocrity is not

[1] Sym. *Ep.* i. 53, remissa tempora . . . libris veterum ruminandis libenter expendis; cf. *C.I.L.* vi. 1779, *d*, vel quae periti condidere carmina, vel quae solutis vocibus sunt edita, meliora reddis quam legendo sumpseras. Seeck's *Sym.* lxxxvii. n. 394.

[2] *C.I.L.* vi. 1783; cf. 1782, historico disertissimo.

[3] Sid. *Ep.* viii. 3; cf. Seeck, cxv.

[4] Cf. the note to the Laurentian MS. of Apuleius quoted in Seeck, clvi.; Hildebrand's *Prol. ad Apul.* lxi.

[5] Sym. *Ep.* iv. 60, 63, 64.

[6] *Ib.* iv. 18-56.

[7] *De Raptu Proserp.* ii., praef. 50.

[8] Sym. *Ep.* iv. 18.

altogether unheard of. What literary clique can cast the first stone? And, after all, it is better to be vain of knowledge and literary facility than of wealth or birth. The very weakness shows a deference for ideals which rise above the level of bourgeois self-complacency, or of the stolid pride of inherited rank.

Symmachus was a good man according to his lights, but he was not a very strong man. And one of his weaknesses was literary affectation. He evidently took enormous pains with these letters. He had, as he confesses, little to say, but he says it in the most elaborate and ingenious style of which he is capable. Yet he apologises more than once for his poverty of talent and phrase, and he is guilty of the amusing falsehood that his style is unstudied.[1] To one of his correspondents he appeals to keep the letter for his own reading, yet in the same letter he admits that his secretaries, "per examinis ignorantiam," are preserving copies of what he writes.[2] Perhaps, however, this was not all vanity and affectation. It is possible to have a modest conception of one's native talent, along with the ambition that the fruits of elaborate care and cultivation should survive. The true Roman, who reverenced the great memories of the past, had a passionate, though often a futile, desire to live in the memory of coming ages.

The literary conversations in which some of the intimate friends of Symmachus take part in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius (although the matter is often borrowed from Gellius and earlier writers)[3] probably give a fairly correct idea of the literary tone and interests of that circle. The subject will be dealt with at length in another chapter. For the present it is sufficient to say

[1] *Ep.* i. 14; iv. 27, sum quidem pauper loquendi.

[2] *Ib.* v. 85, quare velim tibi habeas quae incogitata proferimus. Cf. his advice to his son to cultivate a certain negligence of style in his letters, a precept which Symmachus did not enforce by example, vii. 9.

[3] Peter, *Gesch. Litt.* i. p. 143.

that the literary criticism in Macrobius is far from contemptible. The minute antiquarianism, indeed, may seem to us sometimes rather trifling. But to a Roman, like Praetextatus, who was still loyal to the faith of his ancestors and to the past, every scrap of the ancient lore of his race was precious. And in the minute and often delicate appreciation, not only of the learning, but of the literary beauties of Virgil, we are compelled to forgive and almost to forget the blindness and perversity of a generation who admired the great masters, and yet wrote in a style which they would have thought utterly grotesque. And it must be confessed that there is much to forgive. Equipped by the study of the great masterpieces and the most elaborate training, they yet came to write a style which is in many cases a mixture of imitation, affectation, and barbarism. Ingenuity took the place of originality, extravagance and exaggeration of real force. Style, in fact, became a mere "jargon of experts." And the initiated were never weary of exchanging the most fulsome flattery. In a letter to his friend Ausonius about his poem on the Moselle, Symmachus, while he gently ridicules the minute description of the fishes of that river, yet has no hesitation in ranking his friend with Virgil.[1] The poet returned the compliment by attributing to the oratory of Symmachus all the force and graces of the oratory of Isocrates, Demosthenes, and Cicero.[2] In the year 378 a Greek rhetorician named Palladius arrived in Rome.[3] The fashionable and cultivated world were carried away by his declamation, "his wealth of invention, his dignity and brilliance of diction." If we are inclined to despise such unreal displays, and such extravagant eulogy, it is well to remember that admiration for mental power, even

[1] *Ep.* i. 14, ego hoc tuum carmen libris Maronis adjungo.
[2] Auson. *Ep.* xvii.
[3] Sym. i. 15, ix. 1; cf. Seeck, cclı.

when misapplied, is better than a Philistine contempt for things of the mind. The aristocratic class in the last age of the Western Empire had many faults, but they treated talent and culture as at least the equals of wealth and rank; and there has seldom been an age when talent and culture received higher rewards. Symmachus recommended the brilliant rhetor to the notice of Ausonius, who was then Pretorian prefect. Palladius was readily enrolled in the ranks of the imperial service, and within three or four years had risen to the great place of master of the offices.[1] In the same year Marinianus, another literary friend of Symmachus, who was a professor of law, rose to the dignity of vicar of the Spanish province.[2] The poet Ausonius is the most brilliant example in that age of the recognition of literary eminence by the State. It has been said with some truth that the reign of Gratian was quite as much the reign of Ausonius. Originally a humble grammarian in the school of Bordeaux, he was appointed by Valentinian his son's tutor. Ausonius possessed the gifts which were then the most admired—infinite facility, the power of giving novelty and importance to trifles by ingenious tricks of phrase, the art of flattering with literary grace. The young Emperor repaid the care and recognised the talents of his teacher by raising him to the quaestorship,[3] the prefecture of the Gauls, and in 379 to the illustrious dignity of the consulship as the colleague of Olybrius, a scion of one of the proudest houses in the Roman aristocracy. The relatives

[1] *C. Th.* vi. 27, 4 (382).

[2] Sym. *Ep.* iii. 23-29. Marinianus is the governor to whom Gratian's constitution of 383 is addressed (*C. Th.* ix. 1, 14). He is also probably the "vicarius" referred to in Sulp. Sev. *Chron.* ii. 49, 3, as being preferred by the Priscillianist heretics to Gregory the prefect. Hence it has been concluded that Marinianus was a pagan.

[3] Auson. *Grat. Act. pro Cons.* ii. 11, te ac patre principibus quaestura communis et tui tantum praefectura beneficii, etc.; cf. Schenkl, Procem. ix.

and friends of Ausonius shared in his advancement. For two or three years nearly all the great prefectures and governorships were held by members of the poet's family.[1] He has also left marks of his ascendency on the Code. Ausonius, at the height of his power and his renown, was faithful to the system of culture which had moulded him. And the famous rescript of 376,[2] which provides for the payment of fixed stipends to the teachers of grammar and rhetoric, was undoubtedly suggested by the old professor of Bordeaux. There is little in the literary productions of that age which a modern reader can admire, and they are only the wreckage of a great mass of probably even less merit. Yet the literary brotherhood, of which Symmachus and Ausonius were leaders, did a service to humanity by their worship of an ideal which their own productions seldom approach.

If the letters of Symmachus are to be taken as a fair picture of the moral tone of his class, we are bound, with some reservations, to form a far more favourable opinion of the state of Roman society than that which is suggested by S. Jerome or Ammianus Marcellinus. There are, it is true, glimpses in Symmachus of the old Roman cruelty, of contempt for slaves and the common people,[3] of selfishness, and lack of public spirit. The Saxons, whom Symmachus had brought at great expense from the far north for his gladiatorial shows, killed one another or committed suicide before the day of combat in the arena arrived.[4] And the usually kind-hearted Symmachus narrates the tragedy with a few words of bitter contempt. He and his friends fought hard to

[1] Seeck's *Sym.* lxxiv. ; Schenkl, x.

[2] *C. Th.* xiii. 3, 11. The law is addressed to Antonius, which Scaliger thought a mistake for Ausonius. Godefroy in his Commentary refutes this conjecture. Antonius was a correspondent of Symmachus, *Ep.* i. 89-93. Cf. Seeck's *Sym.* cix.

[3] Sym. *Ep.* vi. 8, ut est servis familiaris improbitas. But this censure was probably deserved; cf. Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, iv. § 26, c. 5; Hieron. *Ep.* liv.

[4] Sym. *Ib.* ii. 46.

avoid the levy of recruits from their estates at the crisis of the Gildonic war, and actually succeeded in arranging for a composition in money.[1] They also showed what seems an unworthy timidity in the riots caused by the failure of the corn supplies from Africa. They removed their families to the country, and Symmachus had all preparations made for sending his own children away.[2] The same selfish weakness is revealed a few years afterwards in the flight of the wealthy classes, when the troops of Alaric were closing round the city.[3] There is much, too, that is revolting or contemptible in the conduct of public men revealed in the chronicle of those fatal years. The cruelty and greed of Heraclian in his treatment of the refugees who landed in his province of Africa would be almost incredible if we had not the express testimony of S. Jerome.[4] The party, led by Olympius, who carried out the Catholic reaction against the policy of Stilicho, seem to have been at once cruel, incompetent, faithless, and corrupt. It is difficult to say whether blindness or perfidy is more conspicuous in the dealings of the Roman government with Alaric. Honorius is probably responsible for some of this baseness and stupidity. But the great officials who lent themselves to such a policy, if they did not prompt it, cannot be acquitted. The Gothic king was as much superior to his opponents in sincerity and insight as he was in material force.

Yet these vices and weaknesses in the official class should not make us unjust to that society as a whole. Salvianus says that his generation flattered itself on the purity of its morals.[5] The guests in the *Saturnalia* of

[1] *Ep.* vi. 64.

[2] *Ib.* vi. 12, 21, 66.

[3] Rutil. Namat. i. 331:

haec multos lacera suscepit ab urbe fugatos.

[4] Hieron. *Ep.* 130, § 7. Heraclian was the assassin of Stilicho and the friend of Olympius; cf. the splendid contrast of the charity of Laeta, widow of Gratian, Zos. v. 39.

[5] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, vi. § 44.

Macrobius claim that their society is free from many of the grosser forms of luxury and dissipation which prevailed among their ancestors.[1] The *menu* of the pontiff's banquet, at which Lentulus, Lepidus, Caesar, and the Vestal Virgins were present, is treated as disgraceful in its costly and fantastic variety.[2] Peacocks' eggs are not now even in the market.[3] There are no censors and consuls, like Hortensius and Lucullus, who spend a fortune in stocking a fish pond, and who mourn the death of a muraena as if it were a daughter.[4] The insanity which ransacked land and sea for new dainties is now quite unknown. So far from buying them, we have forgotten their very names. You will never see a man now reeling drunk into the forum,[5] surrounded by loose companions, nor a judge on the bench so overcome by wine that he can hardly keep his eyes open.[6] At whose dinner party will you now ever see the dancing girl introduced?[7] Still less will persons of decent breeding themselves indulge in that rage for the dance which disgraced even the matrons of noble houses in the times of the Punic wars. There is the same improvement in the tone about the actor's profession, which even Cicero did not regard as disgraceful.[8] No one would nowadays associate on friendly terms with a Roscius, as Cicero did. It is possible that this may be the picture only of a more fastidious and refined circle, and that there were great houses where the festivities were not so innocent as those described in the *Saturnalia*. But the testimony of Macrobius deserves at least to be weighed against the invective of S. Jerome.

The contempt for slaves expressed by S. Jerome and

[1] Macrob. *Sat.* iii. 13; cf. iii. 17, 12.

[2] *Ib.* iii. 13, 11-13, ipsa vero edulium genera quam dictu turpia!

[3] *Ib.* iii. 13, 2, ova pavonum . . . quae hodie non dicam vilius sed omnino nec venuntur.

[4] *Ib.* iii. 15, 4.

[5] *Ib.* iii. 16, 14.

[6] *Ib.* iii. 16, 16, vix prae vino sustinet palpebras.

[7] *Ib.* iii. 14, 3-7; cf. ii. 1, 7.

[8] *Ib.* iii. 14, 11; cf. Friedländer, ii. p. 295.

Salvianus[1] is not shared by the characters of Macrobius. A certain Euangelus in the *Saturnalia* jeers at the notion that the gods should have any care for slaves.[2] He is taken to task by Praetextatus, the great pagan theologian of the party. Slaves, Praetextatus says, are men like ourselves. There is nothing in the name of slavery to excite horror and contempt. We are all the slaves of God or Fortune. The greatest in earthly state, the highest in wisdom, have had to bear the yoke. The slave is really our fellow servant, made of the same elements, subject to the same chance and change, often with the spirit of the free man in his breast.[3] The real slave is the man who is in bondage to his passions. No servitude can be so shameful as that which is self-imposed.[4] You should treat your slave as a man, even as a friend.[5] It is far better that he should love than that he should fear you. And how often have these despised wretches shown the noblest devotion to their masters, in spite of all the cruelty and contempt with which they have been treated?[6] A slave has been known to personate his master who was in hiding, and to submit to the stroke of the executioner in his place.[7] The slave-girls of Rome once saved the honour of their mistresses at the peril of their own, and were commemorated for ever in the *Nonae Caprotinae*.[8] It is quite true, of course, that these ideas are not peculiar to the fourth or the fifth century. They can be traced back in some form to Seneca, to Plato, to Euripides.[9] But they are expressed with a sincerity and good feeling in Macrobius

[1] Hieron. *Ep.* 54, § 5; Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, iv. 26, praecipitantes fastigia nobilium matrimoniorum in cubilia obscena servarum; cf. iv. § 14.

[2] Macrob. *Sat.* i. 11, 1, quasi vero curent divina de servis.

[3] *Ib.* i. 11, 6-8.

[4] *Ib.* i. 11, 8, certe nulla servitus turpior quam voluntaria.

[5] *Ib.* i. 11, 12. Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 47, servi sunt? immo humiles amici.

[6] *Ib.* i. 11, 13, 14.

[7] *Ib.* i. 11, 16.

[8] *Ib.* i. 11, 36-40.

[9] Pl. *Leges*, vi. p. 777; Eurip. *Ion*, 854; *Helen*, 730; cf. Boissier, *Rel. Rom.* ii. p. 362; Wallon, iii. p. 22.

which leave the impression that they are the convictions of the best and most thoughtful men of his time.

There is nothing brighter and pleasanter in the Letters of Symmachus than the tenderness of his family affections. It is true that, with his ingrained conservatism, he clings to the old Roman idea of the womanly character. The Roman matron from the earliest times had secured to her by family religion a dignified and respected position. She was to some extent the equal of her husband in the management of the household. But the sentiment of ancient Rome forbade her the lighter graces and accomplishments. She was expected to be grave, self-contained, chiefly concerned with household duties, and the nurture of a sturdy and intrepid race. In the early years of the Empire the ideal of woman's position and character underwent a profound change. The change gave rise to many misunderstandings which were the food of satire. But her status, both in law and in fact, really rose. There can be no doubt that the Roman lady of the better sort, without becoming less virtuous and respected, became far more accomplished and attractive. With fewer restraints, she had greater charm and influence. She became, more and more, the equal and companion of her husband, and her influence on public affairs became more decided. The wife of the younger Pliny,[1] to take a typical instance, is the partner in his studies, she knows his books by heart, she shares all his thoughts. In the last age of the Western Empire there is no deterioration in the position and influence of women. In Christian families they cultivate sacred learning, and take the lead in works of charity and mercy. Furiola founded a hospital.[2] Laeta, the widow of Gratian, fed the starving populace of the Capital

[1] Plin. iv. 19. He says of his wife, Calpurnia, accedit his studium litterarum, quod ex mei caritate concepit. Meos libellos habet, lectitat, ediscit etiam; cf. Friedlander, i. p. 353.

[2] Hieron. *Ep.* 77, § 6.

during its siege by the forces of Alaric.[1] Serena, the wife of Stilicho, was an accomplished scholar, and was regarded both by friends and enemies as a serious force in politics.[2] Placidia, the mother of Valentinian III., after all her vicissitudes as the wife of a Gothic chief, probably wielded greater influence in her son's councils than any statesman of the time. On the pagan side, Praetextatus has left an eternal memorial of an ideal wedded union, in which the wife gives not only love, but intellectual support and sympathy to her husband.[3]

The old-fashioned Symmachus would probably have objected to his female relatives taking a prominent part in any public movement. He stoutly resisted the proposal of the vestals to raise a monument to his bosom-friend Praetextatus.[4] He praises his daughter, when she sends him a present of wool-work, for her likeness to the Roman matron of the great age, who sat among her maids, directing them at the spindle or the loom.[5] But Symmachus, for all that, is the most affectionate of fathers. He never forgets a birthday.[6] His daughter's illness gives him the most acute anxiety amid all his public cares. He sends her advice for the care of her health.[7] The nursery troubles of his little granddaughter occupy a good many of his letters.[8] But his solicitude and affection for his son are even more marked. When the boy's first tutor dies, Symmachus takes endless pains to obtain one of equal merit, if possible a man who had been trained in the Gallic schools of rhetoric.[9] He

[1] Zos. v. 39.

[2] Claudian, *Laus Serenae*, 147, 229; Zos. v. 38, *ἐν ὑποψίᾳ ἔλαβε τὴν Σερήναν ἡ γερουσία οἷα τοῦτ' βαρβάρους κατὰ τῆς πόλεως ἀγαγούσαν.*

[3] *C.I.L.* vi. 1779:

Paulina nostri pectoris consortio
fomes pudoris, castitatis vinculum,
amorque purus et fides coelo sata
arcana mentis cui reclusa credidi,
munus deorum, qui maritalem torum
nectunt amicis et pudicis nexibus,
pietate matris, conjugali gratia,
bonis moribus, filiae modestia, etc.

[4] *Ep.* ii. 36.

[5] *Ib.* vi. 67.

[6] *Ib.* vi. 79, 80; i. 11; vi. 48, 49.

[7] *Ib.* vi. 58; cf. vi. 4; v. 33.

[8] *Ib.* vi. 32.

[9] *Ib.* vi. 34. Symmachus had himself a Gallic tutor; cf. *Sym. Ep.* ix. 88.

sets himself to rub up his own Greek in order to help his son in his reading,[1] and he reluctantly declines an invitation to the inaugural ceremony of a friend's consulship, that the boy's studies may not be interrupted.[2] When he is on a mission from the Senate to the Court at Milan,[3] at a time when the Goths were ravaging Cisalpine Gaul, Symmachus never fails on every opportunity to write to his son at Rome.[4] There is a pathetic interest about one of these letters,[5] which was probably written when Symmachus was trying, by a devious route, to reach Milan without encountering the barbarian cavalry.[6] He was in bad health,[7] and engaged on a perilous and anxious mission. The letter contains not a single reference to public or private affairs, but advises the boy to correct a too solemn sententiousness in his epistolary style, by putting into it more life and graceful negligence. The writer died soon afterwards,[8] and almost his last wish for his son was that he might be richly endowed with that literary culture which was the strongest passion of Symmachus.

Symmachus may not be a very interesting character, and his letters are certainly dull reading. Yet their polished brevity and their tone of conventional etiquette are apt to make us unjust to the writer. Wedded to a past which was gone for ever, absorbed in the cold and stately life of a class which was doomed to political impotence, struggling to ignore the significance of a religious revolution which was already triumphant before

[1] *Ep.* iv. 20, repuerascere enim nos jubet pietas. Cf. Sidonius reading Menander with his son (*Ep.* iv. 12), and the advice addressed to his grandson by Ausonius, *Idyl.* iv.

[2] *Ib.* v. 5.

[3] *Ib.* vii. 13; cf. v. 94-95.

[4] *Ib.* vii. 10, 14.

[5] *Ib.* vii. 9.

[6] *Ib.* vii. 13.

[7] *Ib.* v. 96. Symmachus was tortured with gout and renal disease (vi. 4, 16; vi. 73), renum dolore discrucior.

[8] Seeck's *Sym.* lxxiii. Peter (ii. 31) puts his death about 404. I cannot understand Teuffel's calculations in § 418, n. 3. How could Symmachus have been Corrector Lucaniae in 365 if he was born in 350? Cf. Seeck, xliv.

his death, he may appear, to a careless reader, a mere fossil, a shadowy and feeble representative of an effete order. Yet the man's very faithfulness to that order gives him a pathetic interest. And his faithfulness, and that of the school to which he belonged, is the sign of a certain strength and elevation of character. So far as the imperial despotism permitted him, he did his duty to the State. He was the most loyal and helpful friend, always ready with influence or advice, and always mindful to "keep his friendships in repair." His friends were among the leaders of Roman society, Christian or pagan, governors of great provinces, barbarian generals, lawyers, and struggling men of letters. They all regarded him as the chief ornament of the senatorial order, the greatest orator of his time, a paragon of all the virtues.[1] Commanding such universal respect, and surrounded by family affection, Symmachus enjoyed a certain subdued happiness. He was the witness indeed of great changes, which shocked and wounded old conservative and patriotic feeling. But he never lost his placid faith in the destiny of Rome. Although he was a devoted pagan, he would not deny that his Christian friends had found another avenue to "the Great Mystery."[2] And a true charity will not refuse to him the same tolerant hope. He is almost the last Roman of the old school, and, as we bid him farewell, we seem to be standing in the wan, lingering light of a late autumnal sunset.

[1] Auson. *Ep.* xvii., quid enim aliud es quam ex omni bonarum artium ingenio collecta perfectio? Prudent. *c. Sym.* i. 632; *C.I.L.* vi. 1699; cf. Apoll. Sidon. *Ep.* ii. 10, § 5.

[2] *Rel.* 3, uno itinere non potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SOCIETY OF AQUITAINE IN THE TIME OF AUSONIUS

In the next view of Roman society which we have to present to the reader the scene is changed, but hardly the time. We pass from the society of Symmachus to the society of his friend Ausonius of Bordeaux. Bordeaux was remote from the seat of Empire, but it had a university, which in the fourth century was one of the most famous in the Roman world, and it was also a great centre of commerce. Aquitaine must have suffered much, like the rest of Gaul, in the invasions and confusions of the third century.[1] But all traces of them had vanished, and men had almost forgotten that evil time. In the poems of Ausonius Aquitaine is a land of peace and plenty, of vineyards and yellow cornfields, and palatial country seats. The poet can bestow no higher praise on the valley of the Moselle than to compare its charms to the richness and beauty of his native Garonne.[2] The characteristics of the old Celtic or Iberian stocks in south-western Gaul were still strongly marked.[3] The ancient language had been spoken by the grandfathers of Ausonius and his friends.[4] Yet the Aquitaine of

[1] Vop. *Aurel.* c. 6; Vop. *Prob.* c. 13, cum (barbari) . . . per omnes Gallias securi vagarentur. The ruins of Ilerda in Spain (Auson. *Ep.* xxv. 58) are thought to be results of the invasion.

[2] *Idyl.* x. 160.

[3] Auson. *Parent.* iv.

[4] Auson. *Idyl.* ii. 9, sermone impromptus Latio; cf. Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. 27, tu vero vel Celtice aut, si mavis, Gallice loquere; cf. Fauriel, i. p. 434; F. de Coulanges, *La Gaule Rom.* pp. 128-130;

Ausonius was thoroughly Romanised. Its Latin was the purest spoken in Gaul. Its school of rhetoric had great renown, and sometimes furnished a professor to the schools of Rome and Constantinople.[1] Its most brilliant professor had won his way to the consulship and the great prefecture of the West. The most intimate relations were maintained between the academic society of Bordeaux and the literary nobles of the Capital. Faith in the stability of the Empire and Roman culture is perfectly untroubled. There is not a hint of those dim hordes, already mustering for their advance, who within twenty years will be established on the banks of the Garonne.

The poems of Ausonius are of priceless value to one who wishes to know the tone and manner of provincial life in the last age of the Western Empire. And the poet himself, with all his faults, is a very interesting person. He often wastes his skill on unworthy subjects. He is vain, and will flatter extravagantly the vanity of others. Paying a cold and conventional deference to the Christian faith,[2] he is still a literary pagan, incapable of understanding any one who yields to the higher mystic and spiritual impulses.[3] The charm of society and of literature satisfies all his longings. But he has many virtues. Beginning life as a humble teacher, he rose to the highest place which any subject of the Empire could attain. Yet he remained true to his profession and proud of it. There is no such gallery of academic portraits in literature as he has left us. The honours of the great world never for a moment shook his supreme attachment to letters. And he is also most

Jullian, *Ausone*, p. 9. Fauriel and de Coulanges differ as to the interpretation of the passage in Sulp. Sev.; cf. Apoll. Sid. *Ep.* iii. 3, sermonis Celtici squamam depositura nobilitas.

[1] Auson. *Parent.* iii. 16; *Prof. Burdig.* i. 3; Jullian, *Ausone*, p. 92.

[2] *Ephemeris*, *Idyl.* i. 16; cf. his doubts about personal immortality, *Prof. Prof. Burdig.* xxiii. 13; *Parent.* xv. 11.

[3] See his letters to S. Paulinus, especially *Ep.* xxv. 50 *sqq.*

faithful to the ties of blood and old friendship. He has immortalised a family circle who, but for him, would have never emerged from the dim crowd of provincial coteries, who vanish and leave no trace. The portraits of his grandfather,[1] the last of the old Aeduan diviners, of his father,[2] the Stoic physician of Bordeaux, of that throng of female relatives, wanting, perhaps, in brightness and grace, but with a strong charm of masculine force, of detachment, and seriousness, may seem worthless to the literary trifler, but are pure gold to the student of the history of society. The author of the poem on the Moselle will live as almost the only Roman poet who has transferred to verse the subtle and secret charm which nature has to modern eyes.[3] He deserves quite as much to live as the painter of an obscure phase of social life, which in every age is condemned to obscurity by its very virtues.

The *Parentalia*[4] of Ausonius have perhaps an even greater interest than his poems on the Professors of Bordeaux. Ausonius, like his friend Symmachus, has the virtue of loyalty to old associations. No one who has ever loved him, helped him, or shared his fortunes is forgotten. The years of power and splendour at the court of Gratian left him unspoilt and unchanged. Clever, versatile, and ambitious as he was of the honours of the great world, yet when the prize was won, Ausonius gladly returned to the scene where he had taught grammar to raw boys,[5] and to the society of his family and academic friends. Like others of his house, he lived to a great age.[6] His wife had died in the early years of

[1] *Parent.* iv.

[2] *Idyl.* ii.; *Parent.* i.

[3] Mr. Mackail has shown his usual sure literary sense in his judgment of this poem, *Lat. Lit.* p. 266.

[4] Composed after his consulship in 379 (iv. 32), and when his wife had been dead "nine Olympiads" (ix. 8); cf. Schenkl, Procem. xvi.

[5] *Idyl.* iv. 66:

multos lactentibus annis
ipse alui, gremioque fovens et murmura solvens
eripui tenerum blandis nutricibus aevum.

[6] He must have lived at least till A.D. 390. For the *Ludus*

their union,[1] and most of his relatives had gone before him. With old Roman piety, and in a strain far more pagan than Christian, he has commemorated their virtues, and saved them from oblivion. Few of his circle were more important in their day than the forgotten worthies who sleep in any of our country churchyards. But their portraits enable us to imagine how quiet people were living in the last years of Theodosius.

The grandfather of the poet, by his mother's side, was a member of one of the noblest Aeduan houses in the territory of Lyons. In the confusion of the reign of Tetricus he had to go into distant exile and poverty. He was an adept in astrology and other superstitious arts of his heathen ancestors, and among his papers was discovered the horoscope of his grandson, predicting the famous consulship of 379.[2] For his father the poet had a profound reverence.[3] Born to modest fortune, which gave him a place in the municipal councils of Bazas and Bordeaux, he practised as a physician for the greater part of his life, till, on his son's advancement, he was suddenly raised to the prefecture of the Illyrian province. He was probably a philosophic pagan, a Stoic of the type of M. Aurelius, whom he resembles in many traits. Yet he had many virtues which we are accustomed to regard as peculiarly Christian. He attained the highest medical skill possible in those days, and gave his advice without fee or reward to the poor and afflicted. Careless of money, yet frugal without meanness, he neither added to nor impaired his moderate fortune. Like the sages whom he followed, he found the true wealth in regulation of the desires, but he added to this ideal a warmth of charity, and a certain serenity and sweetness, which softened his

*Septem Sapientium* is dedicated to Drepanius Pacatus, procos. of Africa in that year, *C. Th.* ix. 2, 4. His father lived to about ninety years, *Parent.* i. 4; *Idyl.* ii. 61; cf. Schenkl's *Ausonius*, Prooem. vii.

[1] *Parent.* ix. 8.
[2] *Ib.* iv. 17-22.
[3] *Ib.* i.; *Idyl.* ii.

Stoicism. Holding aloof from scenes of strife and rivalry, and the treacherous friendships of the great, closing his ears to all spiteful rumour, leading a life of dignified contentment and quiet beneficence, he seems an almost flawless character, one of those saintly souls who reach a rare moral elevation without support or impulse from religious faith.

The women of the family were one and all of a masculine and almost puritanical type, reminding one, by a certain quietude and grave purity, of what we have read of New England women two or three generations ago. In their untiring industry and anxious care of the household, they realise the old Roman ideal of woman's office. The poet's grandmother, the wife of the old astrologer, although venerated for her spotless character, had left memories of stern rebuke among her descendants.[1] His mother was a model housewife with a mingled sweetness and gravity.[2] One of his aunts stands out from all the women of the circle. Ausonius remembered her love and kindness to him as a boy. But she had conceived a hatred of the ordinary female life[3] of her time, rejected with scorn all thoughts of marriage, and devoted herself to the study of medicine. His sister, left early a widow, combined the same masculine strength with the peculiar virtues of her own sex. Of all the circle, she is the only one who is described as a religious devotee.[4] Ausonius lost his wife early, and the verses dedicated to her memory are the expression of deep and enduring affection, and a life-long regret.[5] The memory

[1] *Parent.* v. 10 :
blanda austeris imbuit imperiis.

[2] *Ib.* ii. 6.

[3] *Ib.* vi. 7-11 :
foeminei sexus odium tibi semper.
unaque cura
nosse Deum.

[4] *Ib.* xii. 7 :
She was the mother of Magnus Arborius, Praef. Urb. 379, 380 ; *C. Th.* vi. 35, 9 ; Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* ii. 10 ; cf. Rauschen, *Jahrbücher*, pp. 44, 64 ; Schenkl, Prooem. xiv.

[5] *Parent.* ix. 10-16 :
haec graviora facit vulnera longa dies.
volnus alit, quod nuta domus silet et torus aliget,
quod mala non cuiquam, non bona participo.

of pure love and sympathy, the long years which, as they pass over the silent house, make solitude and the pain of loss only deeper, have seldom been pictured with greater and more real affection. When we read these sketches, which bear all the marks of minute faithfulness and sincerity, we can understand the feeling of Tacitus about the gravity and severity of provincial character.[1] These people seem to have had little of definite Christianity. None of them certainly were carried away by the ascetic spirit which withdrew their friend Paulinus from the world. But they are industrious and high-minded; they take life almost too seriously; they have a certain distinction of hereditary virtue.

Ausonius himself, although he has a genuine admiration for the virtues of his family, and really possesses many of them,[2] was also the most brilliant child of that Gallic renaissance of the fourth century which extended from Constantine to Theodosius. It was a kind of "Indian summer," a long pause of tranquillity between two periods of convulsion. But it was an age of illusions. The Empire, which seemed to have regathered its strength, was mined by incurable disease. There was a great energy of academic life, but Roman culture had worked itself out and was living on its past accumulations. The terror of the barbarians who threatened the frontier of the Rhine seemed for a time to be laid. Yet the campaigns of Julian and Valentinian, although victorious, had revealed the unexhausted strength of the enemy.

[1] *Ann.* iii. 55: xvi. 5.

[2] The personal character of Ausonius appears to have been without reproach. But he sometimes shows a lamentable pruriency, as in the "Cento nuptialis" *Idyl.* xiii. Ausonius lays the blame on Valentinian who ordered this miserable desecration of "vates sacer." He may well say, piget Virgiliani carminis dignitatem tam joculari dehonestasse materia. Yet the morality of Valentinian seems to have been as irreproachable (Amm. Marc. xxx. 9, 2) as Ausonius asserts that his own was: lasciva est nobis pagina, vita proba. Cf. H. Nettleship, *Lectures and Essays*, 2nd series, p. 39. Referring to the coarseness of Latin satire, Mr. Nettleship says, "I should be disposed to refer this fact not to the moral obliquity of these writers, but to the conventional traditions of their art."

Ausonius, however, in the remote tranquillity of Aquitaine, had no thoughts of these ominous contrasts. His early years were passed in the class-rooms of some of the professors to whom his pen has given an immortality of which they never dreamed. His uncle, Arborius, a professor at Toulouse, whose brilliant rhetorical accomplishments were rewarded by a high place in the capital of the East, roused his ambition and predicted for him a splendid future.[1] But this ambition had for more than thirty years to be satisfied with the limited opportunities of a provincial university, and perhaps a seat in the Municipal Council. It is needless to imagine, as some have done, that the brilliant professor chafed at the restraints and dulness of his humble sphere. Ausonius had the sanity and strength of a stubborn race. He had also early caught that passion for Graeco-Roman culture which in receptive spirits had all the force of religion. The worship of the Boeotian Muses was in men of his type a dangerous rival to the worship of Christ.[2] Ausonius was a teacher of grammar at twenty-five; he was only a teacher of rhetoric at fifty-five.[3] Yet it may be doubted whether he regarded the long interval as a period of monotonous and inglorious toil. Ausonius was not bourgeois in his tastes and ideals. In the poem addressed to his namesake and grandson,[4] although he shows a natural pride in the prefecture and consulship which he has won, he would have the boy face all the troubles of school life, and love his Homer and Menander, his Horace and Virgil as his grandfather had loved them. The lives of some of his professors were humble and obscure. But he retained a high opinion of the dignity of the teacher, and he looks back with pride on the

[1] *Parent.* iii. 16; cf. Schenkl, Prooem. viii.

[2] *Ep.* xxv. *ad Paulinum*, v. 73.

[3] See Schenkl's Prooem. viii. ix. for the dates in the career of Ausonius. He was probably appointed tutor to Gratian between 363 and 368.

[4] *Idyl.* iv. 46.

hundreds of pupils to whom he had handed on the sacred fire. It should also be remembered that Ausonius, like some of his professors, lived on equal terms with the local aristocracy.[1] His wife, Attusia Lucana Sabina, was the daughter of one of the magnates of Aquitaine, of an old senatorial stock.[2] His father, the Stoic physician, must have had weight and dignity in a society so sound and healthy as we believe that of Bordeaux to have been in his day. Even surrounded by the most extravagant pretensions of new wealth,[3] Ausonius would not have been a mere cipher. And in the Bordeaux of Ausonius wealth was not new; birth was respected more than wealth; and literary eminence perhaps more than either.

The life of Ausonius in his green old age, when he had returned from the Imperial Court, to spend his remaining years among his friends, is very much the kind of life which we shall find the nobles of Aquitaine and Auvergne leading nearly a century after his death. It has been often repeated that Roman society was to the last essentially urban in its tastes and character, and that the love of the country came in with the German invaders. Nothing could be farther from the truth.[4] Down to the great invasions of the third century the Gauls were passionately fond of city life, in which they seemed to find the finest essence of Roman civilisation. But in the fourth century there are obvious signs of a change of feeling. In the age of the Antonines the towns were open, spreading capriciously with ample spaces, liberally embellished with theatres, temples, triumphal arches, all the buildings which could satisfy taste, or minister to

[1] Cf. the way in which Paulinus of Nola speaks of him in his *Poems*, xi. 8, x. 96. Paulinus was one of the greatest nobles of his province.

[2] *Parent.* ix. 5:
nobiles a proavis et origine clara senatus.

[3] Yet the *nouveaux riches* were not unknown then; cf. Auson, *Epigr.* xxvi.:
quidam superbus opibus et fastu tumens,
tantumque verbis nobilis, etc.

[4] F. de Coulanges, *La Gaule Rom.*, pp. 207, 209.

convenience or luxury.[1] In the reign of Gratian and Valentinian many of them had become fortresses, with lofty walls built of blocks which had been often quarried out of the ruins of the theatres and basilicas of an earlier age. The space within the walls is cramped, the streets are narrow and dark. Everything is sacrificed to the necessity for military strength.

Ausonius must have spent many years in Bordeaux when he was toiling as a professor. But, when he was emancipated and had attained distinction and wealth, he could barely endure the life of the town during a short visit.[2] He is disgusted with the crowds and noises and sordid life of its narrow streets, and longs for the spacious freedom of the country where you can do what you please undisturbed. This love for tranquillity and ease, for the fresh beauty of rural scenery and the abundance of a great estate, breathes through his poems. There can be little doubt that the "life of the chateau" towards the end of the fourth century has thrown the brilliant city life of the ancient world into the shade. The young noble may pass a few years at Lyons or Bordeaux to attend the lectures of the professors. In later years he may visit the neighbouring city to take part in a festival of the Church,[3] or to attend a meeting of the Curia. But his heart is in the country, and there the best part of his life is spent.

As the life of the towns becomes more squalid and sombre, the life of the upper class on their rural estates becomes more attractive. There are indeed shadows on the landscape of Ausonius. Brigands are heard of now and then,[4] and years of scarcity are not unknown.[5] Yet

[1] C. Jullian, *Ausone et Bordeaux*, p. 115.

[2] *Idyl.* iii. 30; *Ep.* x. 18 *sqq.* The same feeling comes out again and again in the letters of Symmachus; *Ep.* i. 3, v. 78, agri quiete delector, vi. 66, vii. 31.

[3] *Ep.* viii. 9.
instantis revocant quia nos sollennia Paschae.
cf. x. 16:
nos etenim primis sanctum post Pascha diebus
avemus agrum visere.

[4] *Ib.* iv. 23.

[5] *Ib.* xxii. 21, 42; *Idyl.* iii. 27.

in spite of an outburst of pessimism which seems to be a reminiscence of Sophocles,[1] the life of Aquitaine in the poet's days was apparently bright and happy, with no foreboding of the storm which was to burst upon it before a generation had passed away. Skilful culture had developed the natural wealth and charm of a favoured region. Stately country seats, on which the accumulating wealth of generations had been expended in satisfying luxurious or artistic taste, rose everywhere along the banks of the Garonne. The cold of winter was the great plague of country life. But these houses had apartments arranged to suit the varying temperature of the seasons. They were furnished with luxurious baths and well-stocked libraries. Their granaries were stored with ample supplies against a stinted harvest.[2] The richer senators had several such estates. The names and sites of two or three belonging to Ausonius have been ascertained by antiquarian care.[3] The great man of course had his anxieties. His vineyard and corn-land and meadow, which were the sources of his wealth, could not be left entirely to the management of the procurator.[4] We hear now and then of a bad year when supplies had to be brought up from near and far,[5] and when the difficulties of transport were severely felt. But the note of Ausonius is gaiety and contentment. He seems to have suffered little from the ennui of provincial life, after all the excitement and splendour of his years of office. The tedium of one estate could be escaped or relieved by passing on to another, or by receiving friends and visiting in return. Travelling by river or road in Aquitaine in those days was probably easier and quicker than it was for the

[1] *Idyl.* xv. 48; cf. Soph. *O. C.* 1225, *μὴ φῦναι τὸν ἅπαντα νικᾷ λόγον* κ.τ.λ.

[2] *Idyl.* iii. 27:

conduntur fructus geminum mihi semper in annum.

[3] Lucaniacus, *Ep.* xxii. 13; Paulisacus, *Ep.* v. 16.

[4] *Ep.* xxii. gives a lively picture of one of these bailiffs.

[5] Auson. *Ep.* xxii.

English squire in the last century.[1] Couriers passed to and fro, carrying friendly letters, trifling presents, and as trifling poetry. Here and there the teaching of S. Martin had begun to detach an accomplished and wealthy aristocrat from the worldly life of his order. But for the most part the order remained, in spite of its Christian conformity, essentially worldly or pagan in tone and habits, enjoying wealth and the sense of irresponsible ease and freedom which wealth can give,[2] and expending its energy in rural sports or business, in a round of social engagements, or in studying and imitating the great classics which were the strongest link with the past. Society in Aquitaine is very much the same as it was two generations afterwards, when Sidonius visited his friends at Bordeaux.

Ausonius and his circle of course represent the more refined and cultivated section of that society. Just as in the times of Sidonius, there were some who fell short of the highest standard of their order. There is, for instance, an eccentric character named Theon, to whom the poet addressed some of his epistles. Theon had an estate among the sands of Médoc, looking out on the Atlantic.[3] His establishment was rather mean, and he carried on a despicable trade with the peasants of his district.[4] His cattle were sometimes carried off by brigands; but, like the lowland farmer in the days of Rob Roy, Theon had little taste for extreme measures, and came to an amicable composition with the freebooters, on which Ausonius rallies him.[5] Yet he is a daring sportsman, and will follow the wild boar with a reckless ardour, which sometimes brings him and his friends into danger of life or limb.[6] At first one cannot help wondering what sympathy there could be between this eccentric

[1] Auson. *Ep.* x. 12, situs veni remo aut rota; cf. *ib.* viii. 5; cf. Friedlaender, ii. p. 8.
[2] *Parent.* viii. 8; *Ep.* iv. 30.
[3] *Ep.* iv. 3.
[4] *Ib.* iv. 16.
[5] *Ib.* iv. 24.
[6] *Ib.* iv. 30.

and rather boorish character and the polished literary man and courtier. The link between them was a taste for poetry, although Theon seems to have been a sorry verse-writer, and somewhat of a plagiarist.[1] His conversation may have been better than his verses. At any rate, Ausonius reproaches him with not having paid him a visit for three months,[2] and promises to forgive him a debt if he will only visit Lucaniacus.

The society of Bordeaux, in the old age of Ausonius, is known to us from another source than his poems. In the year of the poet's consulship, his son Hesperius, who had been vicar of Macedonia, proconsul of Africa, and Pretorian prefect of Italy, returned to his native place. The son of Hesperius,[3] Paulinus Pellaeus, as he is called from the place of his birth, has left us a curious autobiographical poem written in his old age, which has a great value both as a picture of the life of a young noble of the time, and of the first appearance of the Visigoths in Gaul. Paulinus was trained in the usual way. He had Greek and Latin tutors, with whom he read the great authors.[4] His youth was passed in a circle which combined the highest official experience with the highest literary culture. Yet no one would recognise in Paulinus the grandson of the tutor of Gratian, or the son of the prefect of Italy. We cannot help feeling, as we read the *Eucharisticos*, that, although Paulinus may be a better Christian than Ausonius, in other respects the race of the poet has degenerated fast. Paulinus may have known Greek well, from the accident of his birth in an eastern province, but his limping hexameters, and pointless, colourless style, would have ruffled even the placid good-nature of his

[1] *Ep.* iv. 10.

[2] *Ib.* v. 5 *sqq.*

[3] The precise relationship of Paulinus to the poet is a matter of dispute. Seeck (lxxviii.) maintains that he was son of Thalassius and a daughter of Ausonius. Brandes (*Prol.* p. 267) holds that the father of Paulinus was Hesperius, the poet's son. Cf. Ebert, *Allgem. Gesch. der Lit. des Mittelalters*, i. p. 409; Schenkl, Proœm. xiv.

[4] *Eucharist.* v. 72, 117.

grandfather, if he had lived to read his verses. The gloss of humane culture has worn off, and there is revealed a rather sordid and materialised character, the product of leisure without higher interests, and wealth without a sense of public duty. The descendant of Ausonius and Hesperius has hardly a word to say about literature and politics.

Yet, as the revelation of the interior of a great house in the last quarter of the fourth century, the *Eucharisticos* has no mean value. It is perfectly frank and artless. Paulinus recalls with gratitude the anxious care of his parents to protect his youthful innocence,[1] but confesses that, although he avoided scandalous amours, he yielded to the temptations which a system of household slavery always offers. His early studies were interrupted by ill-health,[2] and, by his doctor's orders, he devoted himself to field sports, which his father, who had given them up, resumed, in order to bear him company. Henceforth his whole taste was for fine horses with splendid trappings, tall grooms, swift hawks and hounds, and the most foppish and fashionable dress.[3] His tennis balls had to be sent for to Rome.[4] Some of his amusements were not quite so innocent,[5] and in his twentieth year his parents arranged for him a marriage with the daughter of a noble house,[6] whose estates had been impoverished by neglect. Paulinus resigned his freedom not without regret. He industriously devoted himself to reform the management of his wife's property,[7] roused up the laggards, renewed the exhausted vines, improved the culture of the fields, and paid off the fiscal debts. For the next ten years he led a life of luxurious repose. He plumes himself on being unambitious and fond of ease and quietness. He is completely satisfied with the

[1] *Eucharr.* v. 154, 166
[2] *Ib.* v. 125.
[3] *Ib.* v. 143.
[4] *Ib.* v. 146.
[5] *Ib.* v. 166.
[6] *Ib.* v. 180.
[7] *Ib.* v. 194.

enjoyment of his great house, with its ample and elegant rooms adapted to the varying seasons, his crowds of young and handsome slaves, his artistic plate and furniture, his crowded stables and stately carriages.[1] He was, as he describes himself, a "sectator deliciarum,"[2] and nothing more. This self-centred contentment with the material pleasures of life, this rather vacant existence, gliding away in ease and luxury, and a round of trivial social engagements, not the frantic debauchery described by Salvianus, is the real reproach against the character of the upper class of that age. The luxurious repose of Paulinus and his kind was soon rudely disturbed by the apparition of the Goths of Ataulphus.

The society of Ausonius seem to be calmly confident of the permanence of their ideals of culture, and hardly conscious of the great movement which was setting towards the life of prayer and renunciation. Ausonius is indeed disturbed by the retirement of S. Paulinus,[3] his favourite pupil, from the world of refinement and social distinction; but his feeling seems to be purely personal,[4] that his friend, so richly endowed, with the promise of such a brilliant life before him, should forget his traditions and his worldly hopes, and bury his gifts in the cloister. The work of S. Martin was done when these letters were written. Yet S. Martin is never mentioned. Probably Ausonius had as little conception of the range and force of the movement as the great senator of Nero's court had of the world-wide revolution which was to be the result of the preaching of S. Paul.

Yet the impulse to asceticism, originally propagated from the Eastern deserts, and stimulated by the preaching and magnetic influence of S. Martin in Gaul, had gained extraordinary momentum in the last years of Ausonius. The tales of wonder and miracle which

[1] *Euchar.* v. 205 *sqq.*
[2] *Ib.* v. 216.
[3] Auson. *Ep.* xxiv.-xxv.
[4] *Ib.* xxv. 50.

rapidly clustered round the name of the great preacher are the surest proof of the power with which his mission affected the popular imagination. His *Life*, by Sulpicius Severus, within two or three years was widely read in Gaul, Italy, Illyria, and had found its way even to the solitaries in the deserts of Egypt and Cyrene.[1] S. Paulinus, who introduced the book to Roman readers,[2] was one of the first-fruits of the great religious awakening. He gave up his wealth and consular rank, and the charms of his great estate on the Garonne, and, after some years of retreat in Spain, finally settled at Nola.[3] His example of renunciation created a profound sensation all over the West.[4] It was followed by many of his order. And from one of these, Sulpicius Severus, an advocate, and man of fortune, we have the fullest record of the movement. He was a dear friend of S. Paulinus, with whom from his retreat in Gaul he constantly corresponded. But Paulinus, from some cause, could never succeed in drawing Sulpicius to the monastery of Nola.[5]

Sulpicius makes no concealment of the forces which were arrayed against the ascetic movement. The sceptical or indifferent scoffed at the miracles of S. Martin. The polished man of the world, according to his temperament, mourned or ridiculed the blind fanaticism which could desert the ranks of culture and easy-going self-indulgence for the solitude and austerity of the hermitage.[6] Even

[1] S. Paulin. Nol. *Ep.* xi. 11; Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. c. 23, ii. 17; cf. Migne, *Patrol. Lat.* lxi.; *Prol.* c. xxx.

[2] Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. c. 23, § 4.

[3] S. Paulinus met S. Martin once at Vienne (*Ep.* 18, § 9). S. Martin cured him of some affection of the eyes (Sulp. Sev. *vit. S. Mart.* c. 19, 3). For the circumstances of his conversion cf. *Prol.* cc. iv. v. in Migne, t. lxi. As to the precise time of his stay at Barcelona, and the relation of his Poems x. xi. to Auson. *Ep.* 23, 24, 25, cf. Schenkl, Procem. xi. *sqq.*; Rauschen, *Jahrbücher*, Exc. xxiii.; Ebert, i. p. 297.

[4] Aug. *Ep.* 31, § 5; Hieron. *Ep.* 118, § 5; Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* iii. c. 17, § 3; Ambros. *Ep.* 58.

[5] On Sulp. Sev. and his relations with S. Paulinus, cf. Gennad. *de Scrip. Eccl.* c. xix.; Paulin, *Ep.* xxiv. § 1; xi. 6; v. §§ 5, 13; i. §§ 10, 11.

[6] Sulp Sev. *Dial.* ii. c. 13, § 7; iii. c. 5, § 4; S Paulin. *Ep.* xi. § 3.

the bishops and secular clergy, who tried to ignore the great saint and missionary, looked with ill-disguised suspicion on an enthusiasm which had no respect for ecclesiastical routine.[1] But nothing could check the eager passion for a spirituality unattainable in the world of culture and conventionality. Towards the end of the fourth century, great religious houses, for common studies and devotion, began to be founded in Southern Gaul, and the famous monasteries of S. Victor and Lérins date from the early years of the fifth century. Numbers buried themselves in secluded hermitages among the woods and rocks, and reproduced in Gaul the austerity and the marvels of the anchoret life of the Thebaid.

The East had sent the first call to the life of renunciation, and it was from the East that a second powerful impulse came. When S. Jerome in 386 retired to the monasteries of Bethlehem, he became famous over all the Roman world. His great personality stood out as prominent and as attractive as even that of S. Augustine. He added to the monastic life fresh lustre by his vivid intellectual force, and his contagious enthusiasm for the study of Holy Writ. His letters on questions of casuistry or biblical interpretation flew to the remotest parts of the Empire. The charm which his descriptions threw around the Holy Places drew numbers of pilgrims, even from the British Isles, to visit the scene of the Nativity,[2] where the greatest doctor of the Church was with vast labour striving to make clear to himself and to posterity the real meaning of the sacred text. Before the end of the fourth century, the resources of the monastery at Bethlehem could hardly cope with the numbers who thronged thither from the farthest West. And each pilgrim on his return,

[1] Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. c. 24, § 3, inter clericos dissidentes, inter episcopos saevientes; c. 26, § 3, soli illum clerici, soli nesciunt sacerdotes; cf. *vit. S. Mart.* c. 27.

[2] Hieron. *Ep.* 66, § 14; 46, § 10, divisus ab orbe nostro Britannus . . . quaerit locum fama sibi tantum et Scripturarum relatione cognitum; cf. 58, § 4.

by the tales of what he had seen and heard, roused the ardour of others to make the same journey. We have the description of such a scene in the *Dialogues* of Sulpicius Severus. In a hermitage in Southern Gaul,[1] a monk named Postumianus gives an animated account of his pilgrimage to the East to eager bystanders. He had crossed the sea in five days to Carthage,[2] and spent a week among the sands of Cyrene with a hermit who had erected in the waste a tiny chapel roofed with boughs.[3] In Egypt he found a conflict on the orthodoxy of Origen raging between the bishops and the monks,[4] and the sympathies of Postumianus seem to be with the suspected father. A journey of sixteen stages brought him to the cell of Jerome at Bethlehem.[5] Postumianus has the greatest admiration for the prodigious learning and industry of the saint, but the brother to whom he is telling his adventures has a grudge against Jerome for his attacks on the monastic character. S. Jerome's writings had already a wide circulation in Gaul, and his pictures of monkish avarice, vanity, gluttony, not to speak of graver faults, have offended all the more deeply because they seem to be true.[6] Postumianus on his return visited Egypt, the land where the ascetic ideal was highest, and where solitary perfection had worked its greatest wonders. The Nile was lined with monastic retreats;[7] as many as 3000 monks were gathered in one community. There the natural waywardness of the human will was crushed in a terrible novitiate, in which unquestioning faith was often rewarded by miracle. One novice had passed

[1] Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. c. 1.
[2] *Ib.* i. c. 2.
[3] *Ib.* i. c. 5.
[4] *Ib.* i. c. 6. Sulpicius himself was hardly orthodox. His sympathies in his old age were Pelagian; cf. Gennad. *de Script. Eccl.* xix., hic in senectute sua a Pelagianis deceptus.
[5] *Ib.* i. c. 8.
[6] *Ib.* i. c. 8, 9; ii. 7, 8. Cf. S. Jerome's tale of the monk who had hoarded money; *Ep.* 22, § 33; cf. *Ep.* 125, § 16; 52, § 3.
[7] Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. c. 10, 17, ad Nilum flumen regressus, cujus ripas frequentibus monasteriis consertas utraque ex parte lustravi.

through a furnace unhurt.[1] Another had been ordered for three years to bear the water of the Nile two miles distant, to irrigate a dead stick till it broke into leaf.[2] Others had tamed the beasts of the wilderness till they acquired the feelings and sympathies of man, including even remorse for sin![3] Tales like these, falling on ears eager for marvels of the power of sanctity, drew many another wanderer from Gaul to the mysterious East.

These pilgrimages, however, served a more useful purpose than that of satisfying a love of marvels. The traveller to or from the holy places was often charged with letters of inquiry or instruction on questions of Christian conduct and belief. S. Jerome had many correspondents in Gaul who communicated with him in this way, and some of his most interesting letters were written in reply to them. In the early years of the fifth century a young priest named Apodemius was setting out to visit the Holy Places, and a Gallic lady named Hedibia[4] seized the opportunity of sending S. Jerome a list of questions on theological or practical difficulties. Hedibia belonged to the same family as Euchrotia and Procula,[5] who imperilled their fair fame by allowing themselves to be carried away by the arts or the enthusiasm of the sectary Priscillian. She was of an ancient Druidic house, which had been connected by hereditary ties with the temple of Belen at Bayeux.[6] The Celtic god was discovered by the accommodating theology of Rome to be the counterpart of the Phoebus Apollo of Greek legend, and the double name Apollo-Belenus figures on many inscriptions of the imperial times. The names Phoebicius, Delphidius, and Patera, borne by male members of the house, have a hieratic meaning or association. When the Druid superstitions

[1] Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* i. c. 18, § 4.
[2] *Ib.* i. c. 19, § 3.
[3] *Ib.* i. c. 14, § 5.
[4] Hieron. *Ep.* 120.
[5] Sulp. Sev. *Chron.* ii. 48, § 3.
[6] Auson. *Prof. Burdig.* iv. 9.

were dying away, the family devoted itself to the arts of poetry and eloquence connected with the name of their divine patron. One member rose to eminence as a teacher of rhetoric at Rome in the reign of Constantine.[1] Two others had a provincial reputation about the same time in the school of Bordeaux. Another, in the following generation, named Delphidius, after a troubled career in the reigns of Constantius and Julian, ended his life in the same university, and has a place among the Professors of Ausonius. Hedibia had the mental energy of her race, without any of that tendency to a merely emotional religion which wrecked the peace and tarnished the character of her Priscillianist relatives. The bent of her mind was evidently towards a careful and honest exegesis of the Bible. She begins with the practical inquiry, How can perfection be attained, and how should a widow left childless devote herself to God? But the majority of Hedibia's questions relate to apparent discrepancies in the Gospels, especially in the narratives of the Resurrection, and to difficulties in the interpretation of some passages in S. Paul's Epistles.

Apodemius was also the bearer of a letter of the same kind from a lady named Algasia,[2] who seems to have lived in the diocese of Cahors.[3] Algasia asks, Why did John the Baptist send his disciples to ask "Art thou He which should come?" when he had previously said of Jesus "Behold the Lamb of God"? What is the meaning of the text "If any will come after me, let him deny himself"? Who is the steward of unrighteousness commended by the Lord? But in her list of difficulties there is one which has a pathetic human interest, because

[1] Hieron, *Ep.* 120, praef.; Auson. *Prof.* iv. v.; cf. Thierry's *S. Jerome*, 412.

[2] *Ib.* 121.

[3] *Ib.* 121, habes istic sanctum virum Alethium Presbyterum qui . . . posset solvere quae requiris. He is probably the Alethius, bishop of Cahors, addressed by S. Paulin. Nol. *Ep.* xxxiii.; v. Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* ii. 13.

it seems to refer to the rumours, growing more and more distinct in the year in which the letter was written, of barbarian movements in the north. The writer asks S. Jerome for an interpretation of the ominous saying reported by S. Matthew, "Woe to them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days"; and "Pray that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath." S. Jerome of course interprets the words as referring to the coming of Antichrist[1] and the cruelties of persecution. But Algasia's appeal seems to thrill with the shuddering anxiety of a mother who had heard the tidings that the Sueves and Vandals had passed the Rhine.[2]

[1] *Ep.* 121, c. iv.

[2] According to Prosp. *Chron.* the Vandals crossed the Rhine in the last days of 406. On the date of the letter to Algasia *v.* Praef. in Migne, t. lxxxvi.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SOCIETY OF APOLLINARIS SIDONIUS

For more than a generation after the period described in the *Eucharisticos* the condition and tone of Roman society in the West lies in obscurity. But when we reach the middle of the fifth century we suddenly emerge into daylight again, under the guidance of Apollinaris Sidonius. There is no relic of that age so precious to the historian of society as the works of the bishop and grand seigneur of Auvergne. He does for the social history of the second half of the fifth century what Symmachus and Ausonius do for the closing years of the fourth.

Caius Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius was probably born at Lyons in the year 431, and belonged to one of the most influential and distinguished families in Gaul.[1] His ancestors for generations had held the highest offices in the imperial hierarchy.[2] His grandfather, distinguished both as a jurist and a soldier, had been prefect of the Gauls under the usurper Constantine.[3] His father held

[1] For his proper name see *Carm.* ix. 1; Fertig, i. p. 5 n. For his birthplace, Chaix. *S. Sid. Apoll.* i. p. 10; Sid. iv. 25 (caput civitati nostrae per sacerdotium); *Carm.* xiii. 23. See also Germain's *Apoll. Sid.* Exc. 1. For the date of his birth, v. *Ep.* viii. 6, in which he was *adolescens* in the consulship of Asturius (449 Idat. *Chron.*). The meaning of *adolescens* for that age may be inferred from Jordanes, *Get.* 55, Theodoricus jam adolescentiae annos contingens . . . octavum decimum peragens annum. See Fertig, i. p. 6.

[2] *Ep.* i. 3, cui pater, socer, avus, proavus praefecturis urbanis, praetorianisque, etc., micuerunt.

[3] *Ib.* v. 9; iii. 12.

the same office under Valentinian III.[1] His mother belonged to the family of Avitus,[2] and Papianilla his wife was a daughter of that great noble who was one of the last emperors of the West. Sidonius was educated at the school of Lyons,[3] which still in his time retained some of its old celebrity. During his years of academic life, he formed a lifelong friendship with many young men of the leading families of the province.[4] The elevation of his father-in-law Avitus to the imperial throne, in 455, introduced Sidonius at an early age to the society of the capital. His *Panegyrics* on that emperor, and on Majorian and Anthemius, gave him a great reputation as a poet and a man of letters, and for the last he was specially rewarded with the prefecture of the city. Five years afterwards, he was chosen bishop of Auvergne, at the time when it was making a last stand against the Visigoths. He lived probably about fifteen years longer,[5] and passed away amid the passionate grief of his flock, to whom he had been a friend and protector in all their troubles.

The letters of Sidonius were published at intervals, towards the close of his life. They are in all 147, divided into nine books, according to ancient models;[6] but there were many more which he could not recover.[7] Sidonius intended his letters to be read by posterity,[8]

[1] *Ep.* viii. 6; v. 9; in the consulship of Asturius, 449.

[2] *Ib.* iii. 1.

[3] *Carm.* ix. 310. Hoenius was his teacher in rhetoric and poetry, Eusebius in philosophy, *Ep.* iv. 1.

[4] Avitus the younger, *Ep.* iii. 1; Probus, *Carm.* xxiv. 90; Faustinus, *Ep.* iv. 4. See Chaix. *Sid. Apoll.* i. p. 23; Fertig, i. p. 7.

[5] The date of his death is doubtful. In *Ep.* ix. 12 he says that he had been bishop for "three olympiads," which would show that he was living in 482 (or 484). The other authority is Gennadius, *de Scrip. Eccl.* xcii.: floruit ea tempestate qua Leo et Zeno Romanis imperabant. But this does not give any certain clue to the year of his death. See Germ. *Sid. Apoll.* Exc. ii.

[6] *Ep.* ix. 1. Pliny left ten books, but the tenth is addressed exclusively to Trajan. Symmachus left nine books of private letters; another contains Relationes to the Emperors.

[7] *Ib.* vii. 18.

[8] *Ib.* viii. 2.

and he retouched and elaborated his style,[1] especially in the earlier letters,[2] with a view to publication. It is hardly conceivable that, in their present form, many of them should have been addressed to private friends. They were probably given to the world between 477 and 483.

In the three generations between the consulship of Ausonius and the episcopate of Apollinaris Sidonius, we shall find that the upper class of Gallo-Roman society has changed but little in its ideals and aspirations, or even, in spite of great public calamities, in its external fortune. Yet in that interval events of great historic moment had occurred. The fabric of the Western Empire had been shaken to its base. Ausonius had seen the Alemanni hurled across the Rhine by Valentinian,[3] and chased into the recesses of their forests. In the poems of his tranquil old age the names of the barbarians are hardly ever mentioned. Before the birth of Sidonius they had swept from the Rhine to the Pillars of Hercules. In his early youth Visigoth and Roman had met on many a field in Aquitaine,[4] and as allies they had rolled back the hordes of Attila on the plains of Châlons. In his later manhood, the Western provinces were practically lost to the Empire. The Franks had occupied the lower Rhine. The Visigoths were masters of nearly all Western Gaul south of the Loire. The Burgundians were securely seated on the upper Rhine and the Rhone. Roman dominion in Spain had been reduced by the Sueve and Vandal inroads to a mere corner in the north-east of that great province. The Vandals in North Africa had almost crushed the Roman administration and the Catholic faith, had captured Rome itself, and commanded the Mediterranean with their fleets. The

[1] *Ep.* i. 1. He also urged his friends to do the same. Cf. viii. 16; viii 1.

[2] *Ib.* vii. 18.

[3] Auson. *Idyl.* x. Mosella; v. 422; cf. Amm. Marc. xxvii. 10.

[4] Prosp. *Chron.* a. 436, 439, 451

bishop of Auvergne lived to see his diocese, almost the last patch of territory in Gaul left under imperial sway, ceded to the Visigoths, and the last emperor of the West replaced by a German king of Italy. The Theodosian Code reveals the progress of an internal decay which was even more serious than the onslaughts of the invaders. Every branch of the imperial service was becoming disorganised. Corruption was everywhere rampant, and authority was paralysed. The weight of taxation was growing heavier, while the municipal taxpayer was becoming impoverished, and seeking any refuge from a system which oppressed the poor and was defied by the rich. Yet, in spite of these great changes and this collapse of authority, the similarity between the world of Ausonius and that of Sidonius is very remarkable. Even in their material condition, the Gallic aristocracy seem to have suffered little from the general disorganisation. Within a period of thirty years Narbonne had been at least twice besieged by the Goths.[1] Yet in the letters of Sidonius there is no sign that the tranquil and luxurious lives of his friends there have been disturbed. The villa of Consentius, in the neighbourhood of the town, still raised its elegant and lofty pile among vines and olives,[2] with equal charms for the student and the lover of nature. Its master enjoyed his old wealth and luxury, and dispensed hospitality to troops of guests. Even in districts occupied by the Germans, the wealth and status of the upper classes appear to be unimpaired. Namatius, a Gallo-Roman, who was one of the admirals of Euric, with the special charge of warding off the Saxon pirates from the coast of Aquitaine, when he is not on duty, leads the placid life of the country gentleman,[3] occupied

[1] In 436 and 462. Prosp. *Chron.* and Idat.; cf. Sidon. *Carm.* xxiii. 60:

sed per semiruias superbus arces
ostendens veteris decus duelli,
quassatos geris ictibus molares,
laudandis pretiosior ruinis.

[2] Sid. *Carm.* xxiii. 37; *Ep.* viii. 4, ad hoc agris aquisque, vinetis atque olivetis, vestibulo campo calle amoenissimus.

[3] *Ep.* viii. 6.

with building, hunting, and literature. In the territory of the Burgundians the fortunes of the upper class seem to have been as little altered. Bishop Patiens and Ecdicius, the brother-in-law of Sidonius, must have drawn a great part of their revenues from that district. Yet we shall see Ecdicius able to provide subsistence for 4000 starving people in a season of famine.[1] And the good bishop, who was a man of private fortune, in a period of similar distress,[2] organised, at his own expense, a system of wholesale relief, not only for the population along the Rhone and the Saône, but also for places far beyond the limits of his diocese. There is no sign that the great Roman proprietor, so far as the material conditions of his life were concerned, was worse off under the German chief than under the imperial prefect.

That the lower and middle classes suffered cruelly is tolerably certain, but on their condition and feelings Sidonius has little to tell us in his letters. As a bishop, he courageously stood by his people in the hour of danger, defended their rights, and was full of pity for their sufferings. His princely charity was long a tradition in Gaul.[3] But as the great noble, composing elaborate letters to his friends, which he intended for the eyes of posterity, he is almost entirely occupied with the daily life, the peculiar tastes and ambitions of his own order. Only here and there do we meet with a slight reference to the burden of the taxpayer, the flight of a colonus, the obscure hardships of the petty trader.[4] All the suffering and reverses of fortune in the classes beneath him, which must have resulted from a great economic revolution, from the oppression of the treasury official, or from the invasions, seem to have had but

[1] Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* ii. 24.

[2] Sid. *Ep.* vi. 12, post Gothicam depopulationem, post segetes incendio absumptas, peculiari sumptu inopiae communi . . . gratuita frumenta misisti, etc.; cf. Chaix, *Apoll. Sidon.* i. p. 319.

[3] Greg. Tur. ii. c. 22.

[4] Sid. *Ep.* ii. 1; v. 19; vi. 4; vi. 8.

little interest for one in whose eyes the men who were descended from prefects and consuls, and who had read Homer and Menander, Virgil and Pliny, together at Lyons or Bordeaux, were the only interesting part of the Roman world.[1] This class, separated from the masses by pride of birth and privilege and riches, was even more cut off from them by its monopoly of culture. An aristocrat, however long his pedigree, however broad his acres, would have hardly found himself at home in the circle of Sidonius if he could not turn off pretty *vers de société*, or letters fashioned in that euphuistic style which centuries of rhetorical discipline had elaborated. The members of that class were bound to one another by the tradition of ancestral friendships, by common interests and pursuits, but not least by academic companionship,[2] and the pursuit of that ideal of culture which more and more came to be regarded as the truest title to the name of Roman, the real stamp of rank. How often does Sidonius remind a friend of the days when they had threaded the mazes of Aristotelian dialectic,[3] or mastered the technique of Latin rhetoric under the same professor at Lyons. For the stability of the material fortunes of his order he betrays no anxiety. If he has a dim consciousness of decadence, it is of a literary decadence,[4] a failure of industry in the noble and lettered class, a failure in devotion to the ancient models, and in the fastidiousness of the literary sense. The crowd who had no tincture of that lore, who knew not the esoteric language of the initiated, were not perhaps despised by such a perfect gentleman, but they

[1] Symmachus speaks of the Senate as "melior pars generis humani."

[2] Sid. *Ep.* iii. 1; v. 9.

[3] *Ib.* iv. 1, tu sub Eusebio nostro inter Aristotelicas categorias artifex dialecticus atticissabas; cf. iii. 1. The best illustration, perhaps, of aristocratic brotherhood is in the letter to Aquilinus, v. 9; cf. Chaix. i. 23.

[4] *Ep.* viii. 8; ii. 14; iv. 17, granditer laetor saltim in inlustri pectore tuo vanescentium litterarum remansisse vestigia; cf. ii. 10.

were regarded with that blank uninterested gaze which sees in the vulgar only a dim and colourless mass. Sidonius feels a certain disgust even for the best of his German neighbours.[1] They are coarse in their habits, they are ignorant and brutish, and have nothing of that elasticity of mind and delicacy of taste which, even at its worst, the training of the Roman schools imparted. We shall hardly be wrong in supposing that his comparative silence about the lower orders of his own countrymen covers a like repugnance. The ferocious punishment which he dealt out to the boors, who were quite innocently trenching over the soil of his ancestor's grave,[2] displays all the contempt of the mediaeval baron for his serfs.

The letters of Sidonius describe the life and feelings of only a single class of Roman society, but they describe that class with a faithfulness which leaves little to be desired. He professed himself an imitator of Symmachus,[3] but in his delineation of the men with whom he lived, and of the scenery and background of their lives, Sidonius far surpasses Symmachus in minuteness of drawing and in depth of colour. Symmachus cultivates brevity and reserve as a matter of taste and etiquette. He seems almost determined not to be satisfying and interesting. The faults of Sidonius are all on the other side. With perhaps no great powers of reflection, with no abundant stock of ideas, he is yet a minute observer, and has a positive delight in amplifying all the results of observation by means of an enormous, and often barbarous, vocabulary, and by all the arts of a perverted rhetoric, which often puts a strain on language that it will not bear. Let any one read the description of the appearance and habits of Theodoric,[4] of the means by

[1] *Ep.* iv. 1, bestialium rigidarumque nationum corda cornea fibraeque glaciales. Cf. vii. 14, barbaros vitas, quia mali putentur, ego etiamsi boni.

[2] *Ib.* iii. 12.

[3] *Ib.* i. 1, Quinti Symmachi rotunditatem . . . insecuturus.

[4] *Ib.* i. 2.

which the parvenu Paeonius raised himself to the prefecture before the accession of Majorian,[1] of the parasite of Lyons,[2] of the delators who surrounded Chilperic,[3] of Vectius the ascetic country gentleman,[4] and, while he will find much to offend a sensitive taste, he will not complain of any want of vividness and colour. If such a critic should, in other sketches of Roman society in Gaul, discover a certain sameness and lack of power to seize the imagination, it would be well for him to reflect what he himself could have done with similar materials. The life of a rich, secure, and highly conventional society does not lend itself to descriptions which enthral the imagination, and satisfy the love of the various and the picturesque. When the Gallo-Roman noble had completed his brief career of imperial "honours," the years of an unruffled and stately life fleeted away in a colourless and monotonous flow. The cold, calm dignity of those great houses, with endless calls to frivolous social duties, and a routine of busy idleness, must surely have made the nobler spirits sometimes long for the more strenuous and stormy life of their ancestors. As we turn the pages of Sidonius, we seem to feel the still, languid oppressiveness of a hot, vacant noontide in one of those villas in Aquitaine or Auvergne. The master may be looking after his wine and oil, or laying a fresh mosaic, or reading Terence or Menander in some shady grotto; his guests are playing tennis, or rattling the dice-box, or tracking the antiquarian lore of Virgil to its sources. The scene is one of tranquil content, or even gaiety. But over all, to our eyes, broods the shadow which haunts the life that is nourished only by memories, and to which the future sends no call and offers no promise.

It may be doubted, however, whether Sidonius

[1] *Ep.* i. 11.
[2] *Ib.* iii. 13.
[3] *Ib.* v. 7.
[4] *Ib.* iv. 9.

regarded his society in any such way. He may have noticed and lamented in his later years a failure of literary energy,[1] a less delicate sense for what he regarded as purity of Latin style; but for the greater part of his life the circle of nobles to which he belonged were enjoying undisturbed the plenty and elegance of their country seats, and were as devoted as himself to the literary art. And his circle was very wide. If we include his letters to bishops and churchmen,[2] it may almost be said to have embraced the greater part of Gaul, from Soissons to Marseilles. If we confine our attention to his secular friends, it certainly covered all Gaul south of the Loire.[3] The energy with which he cultivated his friendships or acquaintanceships is truly admirable. Indeed the best thing about Sidonius is his genius for friendship. His letters range in all directions, to Bourges, to Bordeaux, to Marseilles, to Narbonne, to Lyons, and to many an estate or bishop's house beyond or within that circle. In the last of his poems,[4] he sends the volume forth to travel along a winding path to Narbonne, each stage being marked by some great house where he, on a similar journey, had spent pleasant days. The book on its first stage is to brave the criticism of Domitius, the grammarian of Auvergne. Further on in its journey it is to visit the seat of Ferreolus, father of Tonantius Ferreolus, a great prefect of Gaul and ancestral friend of the poet. It is next to cross the Tarn, and present itself at Voroangus, the seat of Apollinaris, who had sat on the same benches with Sidonius at the school of Lyons. Lingering awhile among the gardens and grottoes on the Gardon, it passes on, from one friend to another, till it reaches the stately home of Magnus at

[1] *Ep.* v. 10, pauci studia nunc honorant; cf. viii. 6, ii. 10, iv. 3 *ad fin.*

[2] Germ., *Apoll. Sid.* p. 136, enumerates seventeen bishops with whom Sidonius corresponded.

[3] The Syagrius of v. 5 lived near Soissons; cf. Greg. Tur. ii. 18, 27.

[4] *Carm.* xxiv.

Narbonne, whose son was linked to Sidonius alike by ties of marriage and by memories of college life.

It would be a wearisome and fruitless task to carry the reader in detail through the long list of the friends of Sidonius.[1] They are now mere shadows. The circle in Narbonne and its neighbourhood was specially brilliant in the eyes of contemporaries. Sidonius in one of his poems[2] has described this crowd of prefects, consuls, jurisconsults, adepts in every branch of literature, even rivals of the great masters; yet not a name in the long list is known to us from other sources. But although the individual may seem insignificant and uninteresting, the class whom he represents deserves study; and the features of the senatorial class were strongly marked.

In more than one of his letters[3] Sidonius sums up his ideal of the Roman noble, the ideal which he would like his son, as he says, "with the help of Christ," to attain. He should, as an almost religious duty, repay the debt of noble birth by adding to the list of family "honours" some great magistracy in the imperial service. He should, without reducing himself to the level of a bailiff or a money-grubber, attend to the management of his estates.[4] Some of his superfluous wealth may be spent in additions to his country seat, or redecorating his baths and saloons with fresh frescoes and marbles. He will be a keen sportsman,[5] after the manner of his Celtic ancestors. But these pursuits should not absorb all his energy. The noble class, the salt of Roman

[1] The task has been piously performed by the Abbé Chaix, t. i. l. 5.

[2] *Carm.* xxiii. 435; cf. *Ep.* viii. 4; Chaix, *Apoll. Sid.* i. p. 241.

[3] *Ep.* v. 16. He writes to tell Papianilla of her brother's elevation to the patriciate. Note the words: qua de re propitio deo Christo ampliatos prosapiae tuae titulos ego festinus gratatoriis apicibus inscripsi; cf. iii. 6, vii. 12, viii. 7, and *Carm.* vii. 158, quos quippe curules et praefecturas constat debere nepoti.

[4] *Ib.* viii. 8.

[5] *Ib.* iii. 3, flumina natatu, venatu nemora fregisti . . . accipiter canis, equus arcus ludo fuere; cf. *Carm.* vii. 183, where the exploits of Avitus in the chase are idealised.

society, is a great brotherhood, bound together by the traditions of hereditary friendship and a common culture of priceless value. The true descendant of a great race will train his son in the same arts and accomplishments which moulded his ancestors and himself.[1] He will also, by scrupulous attention to correspondence and social duties, keep warm the feelings of friendship and interest in common studies. Sidonius, at any rate towards the end of his life, was a devout and pious churchman. But to the last, the ascetic ideals of men like S. Jerome and S. Paulinus seem never in his mind to have obscured the ideal of the wealthy and studious country gentleman, with a wholesome well-balanced nature, fond of sport and farming, proud of his family, devoted to his friends, and above all penetrated with a sense of the obligation to carry on the tradition of culture. To be false to letters was to be false to family honour and to Rome.

Pride of birth was one of the strongest feelings in the Gallo-Roman aristocrat. Nor was this much abated by the profession of a severe Christianity. On a remarkable occasion Sidonius was asked by the people of Bourges to nominate a bishop. He delivered an address to justify his choice, and in recommending a certain Simplicius for their suffrages, he lays the greatest stress on his high descent.[2] So in the lives of the saints and great churchmen of that age,[3] the biographer never fails to record the fact of their being of senatorial birth. This class, since the time of Constantine, included all the large

[1] *Ep.* iv. 12 gives a pleasant picture of the bishop reading Terence and Menander with his son; legebamus, pariter laudabamus jocabamurque; cf. the care of Ausonius for his grandson's education, *Idyl.* iv., and Sym. *Ep.* v. 5.

[2] *Ib.* vii. 9. Sidonius gives the address in full which he delivered on the occasion: Parentes ipsius aut cathedris aut tribunalibus praesederunt . . . Uxor illi de Palladiorum stirpe descendit.

[3] Greg. Tur. *S. Julian*, prosapia quidem illustris; *vit. Patrum*, c. 7, sanctus Gregorius ex senatoribus primis; *Hist. Fr.* vi. 39, est enim (Sulpicius) vir valde nobilis, de primis senatoribus Galliarum; cf. *vit. Patrum*, c. 8, 16, 20.

landed proprietors of the provinces. It had become in fact, though not by force of enactment, chiefly hereditary. But admission to its ranks was from time to time obtained by the favour of the Emperor,[1] or by the tenure of some of the offices in the Palatine service. The rank which the founder of a family had won by official service, his descendants strove to dignify by attaining still higher place in the imperial hierarchy.[2] With the mass of the senatorial class, the ambition of office sprang rather from personal or family vanity than from the desire of real power. The prefect of the Gauls was a great potentate[3] wielding a far greater power than the monarch of the largest modern European State. Yet the consulship, which had for many ages been a purely ornamental dignity, ranked, in virtue of its ancient glories, far above the greatest prefecture; and the son of a prefect thought that he was at once honouring and surpassing his father, by gaining the shadowy dignity of the consulship.[4]

Yet it may be doubted whether the assertion is absolutely true that all capacity for government in the upper class had died out.[5] We know little of the actual influence on government exercised even by the great prefects of the fifth century. But we can form some conception of the range and nature of their duties from the Imperial Code. The prefect of the Gauls had the financial and judicial administration of three great

[1] *C. Th.* vi. 2, 2, si quis senatorium consecutus nostra largitate fastigium vel generis felicitate. Cf. Godefroy's Paratitlon to vi. 2. In vi. 3, 2 and 3, the distinction is sharply drawn between senatorial and curial estates. Cf. F. de Coulanges, *La Gaule Rom.* p. 180; Duruy. vii. p. 176.

[2] *Ep.* i. 3; iii. 6.

[3] It should be remembered that this prefecture included Britain and Spain as well as Gaul proper.

[4] *C. Th.* vi. 6, 1, diversa culmina dignitatum consulatui cedere . . . decernimus; cf. Auson. *Act. Grat.* ad fin.; Sidon. *Ep.* v. 16, § 4, ut sicut nos utramque familiam nostram praefectoriam nancti etiam patriciam reddidimus, ita ipsi quam suscipiunt patriciam faciant consularem; cf. Friedl. i. p. 206.

[5] De Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 220, la classe sénatoriale elle même manque de l'esprit de gouvernement.

countries in his hands,[1] and the control of a numerous body of officials. Although, from the time of Constantine, the prefect had no military command, he had to provide for the commissariat of the legions quartered in his province. He had also the superintendence of the great roads and the postal service. He had to advise subordinate magistrates on questions of difficulty, and to hear appeals from their decisions. Above all he exercised enormous powers over the levying of taxes and the whole financial service. It was his duty at once to secure full and regular collection, and to check venality or oppression. It was also his business to give due publicity to all edicts of the Emperor, and in the framing of these edicts there is no doubt that the suggestions and advice of a governor had great weight. The vast machine had to be kept running, and any defect in its working had to be brought to the notice of the Emperor. In the fifth century the limits of the great prefecture of the West were steadily retreating from the Atlantic towards the Mediterranean. Yet the anxieties of its ruler must have increased as the times grew darker. In the career of Tonantius Ferreolus, one of the friends of Sidonius, we have an example of a public-spirited noble, and a benevolent and vigorous governor. Along with Avitus, he bore a foremost part in organising the united resistance of Goth and Roman to the Hun invasion in 451. And he signalised his tenure of office in 453 by lightening the burden of taxation in those disastrous years.[2] The later Roman Code bears witness to the strenuous efforts of many high-minded prefects to check the growing disorganisation of society.

There can be little doubt, however, that in the

[1] On the powers of the Pretorian prefect see Godefroy's ed. of *C. Th.* vol. vi. pt. ii. ad init. "Notitia Praefectorum"; cf. Notitia Dig. ed. Böcking, t. ii. 13, 14, and 166, where the Formula Praef. Praet. is given; Fauriel, *Hist. de la Gaule Mérid.* i. p. 351.

[2] *Ep.* vii. 12; *Carm.* vii. 315; Fauriel, *Hist. de la Gaule Mérid.* i. p. 227.

interval between Ausonius and Sidonius the love of country life had increased, and public spirit or ambition was declining. Many of the highest class were becoming mere farmers on a large scale, and cared for little else than their flocks and vineyards. Sidonius, who had an almost religious faith in his order, and who regarded himself as the guardian of Latin culture in an age of decadence, was revolted by this return to the rude and solitary rusticity of an earlier time. He was also alarmed by the passion for money-making which often accompanied such tastes. Several of his letters are written to recall these degenerate nobles to their true life and vocation.[1] And one in particular deserves notice from the birth and rank of the person to whom it is addressed.[2] Syagrius belonged to one of those Gallic families in which high office was practically hereditary. He was great-grandson of that Syagrius who was consul in 381, who was a correspondent of Symmachus,[3] and from whose daughter Tonantius Ferreolus,[4] the greatest of Gallic nobles, was descended. The Syagrii were connected with the district of Lyons, and their family estate lay somewhere near Autun, in the neighbourhood of the Burgundians. The Syagrius of the time of Sidonius had fallen away from the example of his ancestors, and from that ideal of aristocratic life which we have attempted to describe. Trained in all the literary arts of the Gallic schools, he had stooped to learn the language of the conquerors, in which he had acquired a facility which

[1] *Ep.* ii. 14 ; vii. 15 ; i. 6.

[2] *Ib.* viii. 8. The estate of Taionnacus may have been in the neighbourhood of Soissons. From v. 5 it appears that Syagrius was a master of German.

[3] In the Index to Luetjohann's ed. of *Sidonius*, the Syagrius of v. 5 is said to be father of the Syagrius in viii. 8. But Migne and Chaix (i. 178, 189) are probably right in treating the letters as addressed to the same person, the son of Egidius. On Flav. Afranius Syagrius, cos. 381, cf. Amm. Marc. xxviii. 2, 9 ; Seeck's *Sym.* cx. ; Rauschen, *Jahrb.* p. 85 ; Sid. *Ep.* v. 17, conditorium Syagrii consulis.

[4] Sid. *Ep.* i. 7, Afranii Syagrii consulis e filia nepos ; ii. 9 ; vii. 12.

moves the sarcasm of Sidonius. But he had sunk even lower than this. He had forgotten the long line of his ancestral dignities and his duty to his country, and buried himself in his rural property, with no ambition beyond that of growing fine crops and increasing his income. Syagrius may have been a degenerate noble, but it is also possible that he was a shrewd, sensible man, who saw the hollowness of the so-called ambition of his class, who rated cheap the "honours" of a power no longer able to defend its citizens, and who thought that his energy might be more usefully expended in cultivating the friendship of his German neighbours, and in the management of a great estate, with its crowd of serfs and dependants, than in playing ball and dice, exchanging repartees, or applauding with grotesque exaggeration a literary neighbour's feeble imitations of Statius or Lucan.

It would be unfair, however, to Sidonius to represent him as indifferent to the commonplace duties of a great landholder. Indeed, the *villa* or senatorial estate must have demanded some attention from any prudent owner. The villicus or procurator was often a man of servile origin, and the Theodosian Code leaves the impression that these agents had to be carefully watched.[1] Although the senatorial estates in Gaul were probably never equal in extent to those vast *latifundia* which were the ruin of Italian husbandry,[2] yet they were ordinarily of considerable acreage. Ausonius had a patrimonial estate near Bazas, which he describes in modest terms as a *villula* or *herediolum*.[3] Yet it consisted of more than 1000 acres, of which 200 were arable land, 100 vineyard, 50 meadow, the rest being woodland. The estates of the friends of Sidonius were probably of far larger extent than that of the poet of Bordeaux. The nearest approach

[1] *C. Th.* ix. 30, 2; ii. 30, 2. [2] Plin. *H.N.* xviii. 35.
[3] Auson. *Idyl.* iii. 10.

to any indication of their size is contained in a letter describing the domains of Apollinaris and Ferreolus.[1] They adjoin one another, and the distance between the two mansions is rather long for a walk, but rather short for a ride on horseback. The great noble, both in Gaul and Italy, often possessed many of these estates in different districts, or even in different provinces. The lands of S. Paulinus, which Ausonius describes as "realms," were widely scattered, and when, on his adoption of the ascetic life, they were sold, "they would pass," according to Ausonius, "into the hands of a hundred masters."[2]

It is characteristic of Sidonius that, while he has left us several pictures of great mansions, he never gives even a glimpse of the organisation of an estate. Yet the population of these domains formed in itself a complete and almost self-sufficing community.[3] The great house had in its immediate neighbourhood villages which were occupied by dependants of various grades—slaves or freedmen, coloni and free tenants, some of them ordinary labourers, others paying for their holdings both in money and a stipulated amount of labour. The buildings for the slaves, the stables, and granaries, the mill, the olive and wine-presses, with the workshops, must have formed, on an estate of any magnitude, a little town, demanding a good deal of management and careful superintendence. The superfluous income of the rich man could, in those days, find investment only in loans on mortgage, or in the purchase of other properties, or in additions to the residence of the family.[4] Building was one of the

[1] *Ep.* ii. 9, praediorum his jura contermina, domicilia vicina, quibus interjecta gestatio peditem lassat neque sufficit equitaturo.

[2] Auson. *Ep.* 24, 115.

[3] F. de Coulanges, *L'Alleu*, pp. 87, 88.

[4] The law discouraged trading in the senatorial class, *C. Th.* xiii. 1, 5, cum potiorum quisque aut miscere se negotiationi non debeat, aut pensitationem (*i.e.* lustralis collatio) quod honestas postulat primus agnoscere. Cf. xiii. 1, 8, in which feneratores are brought under the lustralis collatio (a

passions of the Roman aristocrat.[1] The stern, utilitarian architecture of the fortified town, its noise and squalor, repelled him. On his own lands he gave a free rein to his taste for beauty or luxury. The sites of these ancient country houses seem to have been generally chosen for some natural beauty, on the wooded banks of a river or a lake dotted with islands, or at the foot of a sloping hill, with a prospect of forest, meadow, or rich cultivated plain. Sidonius, imitating one of his favourite models, has left us elaborate word-pictures of some of these great houses, in Auvergne, on the Gardon, at Narbonne, or in the neighbourhood of Bordeaux. His own house, which came to him by his marriage with the daughter of the Emperor Avitus, is delineated with a minute care which reveals in every line a passionate love of the delights of rural life and scenery.[2] Domitius, a professor in the neighbouring college of Auvergne, is invited to leave the hot class-room and the narrow streets. Even in umbrageous Auvergne, "the world is on fire"; the ground is seamed and scarred with gaping fissures, the mud is hardening in the bed of the river, whose failing, languid stream hardly drags itself along. But in the retreat of Avitacum there is the spreading coolness which the builder's and the gardener's arts can win from nature even in the dog-days. The mansion has a broad frontage both to the north and the south. A glen, flanked by two lines of hills, opens on the southern lawn before the vestibule. At the south-western corner are the baths close under a woodclad height, from which the felled timber drops at the very mouth of the furnaces. The heated water is carried along the walls by leaden pipes. There are all the

Godefroy's note, and Sid. *Ep.* iv. 24). Cf. *C. Th.* ii. 33, 4, limiting the rate of interest which senators could exact.

[1] *Ep.* v. 11. Building with discretion is one of the laudable occupations of the noble; cf. Friedlander, iii. p. 76.

[2] Sid. *Ep.* ii. 2. Cf. Plin. *Ep.* ii. 17.

apartments for luxurious bathing, brilliantly lighted, with walls of gleaming whiteness and domed roofs resting on graceful columns, ending in the *piscina*, where, through curiously-sculptured heads of lions, the cold water from the hillside rushes tumultuously. On these walls no tale of wantonness is figured, although you may see some epigram "neither good enough to make you read it again, nor so bad as to disgust you with the reading." Hard by are the ladies' room and the spinning-room of the maids. After these you find yourself in a long colonnade looking out on the lake, which lies on the eastern side, embosomed in woods. Passing through a long gallery on the south you would reach the winter dining-room, with a cheerful blaze in the vaulted chimney. And from that you may enter a smaller saloon, with a broad staircase leading up to a verandah which overhangs the lake, where the guest, as he cools his thirst, may watch the fisherman buoying his nets. Or you may take a siesta in a chamber screened from the southern heats, where the cicala in the hot noontide, or the nightingale on summer evenings, will lull you to sleep, while the sheep-bell and shepherd's pipe sound from the hillside. Sidonius, with all his conventionality, cannot repress a natural delight in this fairyland of woodland, lake, and bosky islet: it is so green and cool, a paradise of idyllic tranquillity. And yet he describes it in a euphuism, probably the most curiously artificial, in which genuine feeling was ever encased. The master of that domain, of which he sees the inmost charm, sits in his verandah above the lake, coining phrases which he intended to excite the admiration of posterity, but which would have moved the ridicule or disgust of the masters he adored.

One of these country seats was very much like another. They all have apartments for summer and winter, baths, galleries, libraries. Sometimes, as in the

case of the Burgus of Leontius,[1] they are strongly fortified with all the art of the engineer. It is clear, from the arrangement of these houses, as well as from the general tone of the literary remains of the period, that their owners passed their lives chiefly in the country. But their solitude was broken by constant correspondence, and by frequent visits. Even in the troubled years which followed the accession of Euric,[2] although the roads were not always safe for couriers and travellers,[3] who were liable to be stopped and questioned, communication among the members of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy was never completely interrupted. The great roads, which opened up the country from the first century, could be traversed rapidly by carriages. But the grand seigneur of the time generally preferred to travel on horseback with a numerous suite. Starting in the cool of the morning, he would halt at noon in some shady spot beside a stream where his servants, sent on in advance, had pitched his tent and prepared the mid-day meal.[4] The inns were probably few, and, according to Sidonius, they were bad;[5] but the aristocratic traveller could easily arrange, as a rule, to break his journey at nightfall at the house of some friend. The imagined route of the bishop's poems from Auvergne to Narbonne,[6] following a wavering line of country seats, probably

[1] Sid. *Carm.* xxii. 117:

non illos machina murum,
non aries, non alta strues vel proximus agger,
non quos stridentes torquet catapulta molares,
sed nec testudo nec vinea nec rota currus
jam pridem scalis nequam quassare valebant

Pontius Paulinus, who had been Prætorian prefect in the reign of Constantine (v. Julian's *Ausone*, p. 128), was the builder. He was probably the father of S. Paulinus of Nola, who also bore the name of Pontius; cf. Auson. *Ep.* 24, 103; Migne, *Prol.* t. lxi. c. 1, § 3; Chaix, *Apoll. Sid.* i. 222; Luetjohann's ed. of *Sidon.* Ind. Pers. *s.v.*

[2] He succeeded Theodoric II. in 466, and lived till 483, or 485. Cf. Fauriel, i. 347; Luetjohann's *Sidon.* p. 418.

[3] *Ep.* iii. 4; ix. 5; v. 12.

[4] Such a day's travelling is described *Ep.* iv. 8. For travelling by river see viii. 12; cf. Auson. *Ep.* viii. 5.

[5] *Ib.* viii. 11, ne si destituor domo negata moerens ad maidas eam tabernas, etc.; cf. Friedl. ii. p. 23

[6] *Carm.* xxiv.

represents many a tour of visits made by the author. On one of these excursions Sidonius found himself once in the neighbourhood of the two great villas of Voroangus and Prusianum on the banks of the Gardon, near Nîmes. Their owners, Tonantius Ferreolus and Apollinaris, were among his dearest friends. The estates adjoined one another at the distance of a short ride.[1] Apollinaris and Ferreolus detained their friend for a week, and had an amicable conflict each day for his company. It was difficult to decide between the attractions of these two princely seats. The gardens of Apollinaris were of almost fabulous beauty, and might have rivalled the most delicious scenes in the world of legend or romance.[2] The gardener's skill had trained the foliage into enchanting bowers, where you might dream away the hot hours of noon. On the other hand, the home of Ferreolus offered powerful attractions of a higher kind.[3] Its owner, the descendant of the great Syagrius, and admittedly by birth and official rank the foremost of Gallic nobles, combined remarkable political experience with wide culture. Though now withdrawn from the great world, he had borne a splendid part in repelling the Hun invasion. He had earned the reputation of being a humane and enlightened prefect, and he was chosen to represent his province at the famous prosecution of the corrupt governor Arvandus.[4] His library was amply stocked with all the literature of pagan antiquity, along with the newer literature of the Church; and he was not one of those senators, described by Ammianus, who entered their libraries as seldom as their family vaults.

[1] *Ep.* ii. 9; Chaix, i. 210 *sqq.*

[2] *Ep.* ii. 9, Aracynthum et Nysam, celebrata poetarum carminibus juga, censeas; *Carm.* xxiv. 54-74:

seu flcto potius specu quiescit
collis margine, qua nemus reflexum
nativam dare porticum laborans
non lucum arboribus facit, sed antrum.

[3] *Ep.* i. 7, Tonantius Ferreolus was Prætorian prefect in 453.

[4] Arvandus was Prætorian prefect of Gaul in 469 and impeached at Rome for treacherous communications with Euric. Sid *Ep.* i. 7.

The daily life at Prusianum, as depicted by Sidonius, shows us the charm and also the weakness of aristocratic society in the fifth century.[1] It is very pleasant, but it seems somewhat self-indulgent and frivolous. When Sidonius arrives in the morning, some of the guests are in the tennis-court, others are eagerly engaged in a game of dice, the more sedate are reading Horace or Varro in the library,[2] or discussing the theology of Origen. The *déjeuner* at eleven o'clock was, "after the senatorial fashion," a short but ample meal; and the guests, as they sat over their wine, were amused by the recitation of lively tales. The hours of the afternoon were spent on horseback or in the bath. The baths of Ferreolus seem to have been then in the builder's hands, and the company extemporised a bath by the side of a rivulet. A trench was dug along the bank and roofed over with hair-cloth stretched on a framework of branches. Heated stones were flung into the hollow, and a jet of cold water turned on the glowing heap; and the bathers, having enjoyed the vapour for a time, braced themselves by a plunge in the cool stream. The evening closed with a luxurious banquet.

In this pleasant life one hears little of the women of the household, and this silence has been interpreted as a sign that they were ignored and had a humble place in the family. Yet it is hardly probable that, in the full light of Christianity, the position of women was lower than it was in the days of the pagan Pliny or of the semi-pagan Ausonius.[3] The references to women in Sidonius are indeed scanty, but they show that the ideal of female virtue and culture was high. In a letter to a friend about to be married,[4] he points out, by a long series of

[1] Cf. the day at the villa of Consentius, Sid. *Carm.* xxii. 487.

[2] On libraries in the country see Sid. *Ep.* v. 15; viii. 11; viii. 4.

[3] Plin. *Ep. Calpurniae*, vi. 26; vii. 5; Auson. *Parent.* xii. 5; cf. F. de Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 212.

[4] Sid. *Ep.* ii. 10.

ancient examples, how women may help to sustain the literary ambition of their husbands. In the family of Magnus of Narbonne the ladies were both pious and accomplished, and Eulalia, a cousin of Sidonius, who was married to a son of the house, is described as a very Minerva.[1] In the library of Prusianum there were shelves stocked with religious literature which are intended for the women of the household.[2] In another letter Sidonius sends a friend an elegy on the virtues of a young matron of Lyons,[3] whose early death was a public event, and mourned with every demonstration of grief by the whole community.

There is hardly a trace in the works of Sidonius of that looseness of morals with which Salvianus charges his contemporaries in that very province to which so many of the friends of Sidonius belonged. There is indeed one letter,[4] the tone of which rather startles us in a bishop. It refers to the irregular connection of a young noble with a slave girl. The mistress is treated with loathing and contempt, but the young man is absolved rather easily on the score of morals, and commended for having thrown the girl over, and so consulted his reputation and fortune. His marriage with a lady of noble birth seems, in the eyes of the bishop, to atone for his "error." Such rare glimpses of self-indulgence in the members of a rich, idle, and luxurious caste, with hardly any public interests, and surrounded by crowds of slaves, do not excite much surprise. But the picture of abnormal and universal debauchery given by Salvianus is absolutely unconfirmed by anything in the pages of Sidonius.

[1] *Carm.* xxiv. 95:

hic saepe Eulaliae meae legeris,
cujus Cecropiae pares Minervae
mores et rigidi senes et ipse
quondam purpureus socer timebant.

[2] *Ep.* ii. 9, sic tamen quod qui inter matronarum cathedras codices erant, stilus his religiosus inveniebatur, etc.

[3] *Ib.* ii. 8.

[4] *Ib.* ix. 6; cf. the passage in the *Eucharisticos*, where Paulinus speaks of a similar error of his youth in the same tone, v. 165.

In the description of the debauched parasite in Sidonius,[1] we have indeed a specimen of physical and moral degradation which excites horror and disgust. If the bishop ever gave his flock in the cathedral of Auvergne a sermon in the same style, it must have had a powerful effect. It is composed with the object of warning a young relative of the horrors of the abyss into which his life might plunge, if he neglected the old rules of conduct. Yet in reading the piece, one cannot help feeling that the literary spirit, the spirit of Juvenal and the school rhetoric, has possessed the writer. It is in some respects a powerful piece, but the power is that of a master of words and phrases, who exults in his command of them. There is no light and shade; the whole is black with the smoke of the infernal streams.[2] There may have been, there probably were, degenerate Romans who, in an age of violent and sudden change, lost all sense of self-respect, all feeling of Roman dignity and Christian duty, and who determined to make the best, in a sensual way, of an age of convulsion, to sell their compatriots, to flatter their new masters, and to purchase gross pleasure with the wages of their treachery. All this is probable. Yet we may well doubt whether, even in the most disorganised society, such specimens of utter moral and physical wreck were often seen as the loathsome wretch whom Sidonius has described for edification and warning. The love of word-painting is too evident; the strain and staring contrast of verbal antithesis are too marked to give one confidence in the fidelity of the portrait. The body, deformed in every line and feature by vice, bloated with luxury, and enervated by excess, is described with disgusting and exaggerated emphasis as the fit dwelling of a fouler and uglier soul. The

[1] Sid. *Ep.* iii. 13.

[2] *Ep.* iii. 13, lumina gerit . . . lumine carentia quae Stygiae vice paludis volvunt lacrimas per tenebras . . . facies ita pallida veluti per horas umbris maestificata larvalibus.

whispered slander, the gross innuendo, the affectation of vivacity without wit, of importance without dignity, the hungry eagerness for a hospitable invitation, combined with feigned shyness in accepting, the gross and bestial indulgence, the ravenous throat and the venomous tongue—all this, with many traits we have suppressed, is a picture which we may hope had few counterparts in real life.

Such characters rarely meet us in the pages of Sidonius. His world was probably quite as Christian in sentiment and conduct as our own. It inherited also, as a social and literary tradition, a profound veneration for the virtues of the old Roman character. It was, above all, a society dominated by pride, respect for class-feeling, and imperious good taste. If to the pride and fastidiousness of the polished noble you add the restraints of a collective Christian sentiment, you have a social tone which is not likely in general to be prone to gross indulgence. There is no trace of lubricity on the walls of the mansions, or in the entertainments described in these letters.[1] Like the guests in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius,[2] Sidonius congratulates his generation on being more decent than their ancestors. No wanton frescoes, no suggestive dances and songs, would be tolerated. The friends of Sidonius, Ferreolus, Ecdicius, Consentius, Lampridius, Apollinaris, and a host of others, seem to be, on the whole, as regards private virtue, perfectly regular and unexceptionable in their lives. It is possible that class feeling or the reticence of good nature or good taste may have led Sidonius sometimes to cast a veil over the faults of the dear and pleasant friends of his youth. Yet one cannot help having the impression that his silence about evil is due to its absence, at least in any gross form, among the people with whom he associated.

[1] *Ep.* ii. 2, non hic per nudam pictorum corporum pulchritudinem turpis prostat historia, quae sicut ornat artem devenustat artificem.

[2] *Saturn.* ii. 1. 6.

The real canker at the root of that society was not gross vice, but class-pride, want of public spirit, absorption in the vanities of a sterile culture, cultivated selfishness. It is difficult for a modern man to conceive the bounded view of society taken by people like Symmachus and Sidonius, the cold, stately self-content, the absence of sympathy for the masses lying outside the charmed circle of senatorial rank, the placid faith in the permanence of privilege and wealth, the apparent inability to imagine, even in the presence of tremendous forces of disruption, that society should ever cease to move along the ancient lines. The bureaucratic system of government stifled all interest in public affairs in the natural governing class. Masters of vast domains, yet excluded, as an order, from real political power, the great mass of the senatorial class were condemned to a sterile life of fantastic luxury, literary trifling, or sullen reserve. They had little care for any but their own caste and family, as the representatives of Graeco-Roman culture.[1] With what was regarded as a laudable ambition to add to the "honours" of the family, and a strenuous devotion to the study and imitation of the great authors, there seemed to the stately noble no reason why the calm ceremonious senatorial life should not go on for ever. The aim of all true Romans was to reproduce in successive generations the forms and ideas of the great past, undisturbed by any hope or ambition of ever excelling it. To such a condition of death-like repose or immobility had the imperial system reduced the most intelligent class in the Roman world. Faith in Rome had killed all faith in a wider future for humanity. Society had been elaborately and deliberately stereotyped. As a rule, whatever a man's energy or ambition, he was doomed to

[1] Sidon. *Ep.* viii. 2, nam jam remotis gradibus dignitatum, per quas solebat ultimo a quoque summus quisque discerni, solum erit posthac nobilitatis indicium litteras nosse.

work out his life on the precise lines which his ancestors had followed. All ideas of improvement were nipped in the bud, blasted by the stifling atmosphere of a despotism which, with whatever good intentions, received no guidance or inspiration from the thoughts or needs of the masses, and spent all its strength in maintaining unchanged the lines of an ancient system, instead of finding openings for fresh development. The same immobility reigned in the education of the privileged class. They felt no material need to stimulate invention and practical energy, and their academic training only deepened and intensified the deadening conservatism of unassailable wealth and rank. Their training was exclusively literary; its sole object was to make masters of phrase, rhetoricians, skilled and successful imitators of the great masters of the literary art. Mere style, apart from real knowledge or ideas, was its great aim. It persistently kept before the pupil's gaze the mythological fancies and literary finesse of the great ages. As the material force of the Empire slowly waned, the loftier spirits clung all the more tenaciously to the literary heritage from the past of Greece and Rome, as to a standard of unapproachable perfection. There was no curiosity, no love of scientific inquiry, no hope of further advance. All that was best in the possible achievements of the human spirit lay behind, steeped in the golden haze of a heroic age. In front stretched a gray, flat prospect of cultivated mediocrity. It is hardly too much to say that the despotism of the school tradition was as stifling and fatal to progress as the bureaucratic despotism of Diocletian.

In the time of Ausonius we have caught some glimpses of the ascetic and the intellectual side of the Christian life in Gaul, revealing a spiritual movement in striking contrast to the polished worldly society of the senatorial order, in which class-pride had taken the place of high public spirit, and a dilettante culture had frozen the

springs of moral enthusiasm and energy. The majority of this class, two generations after Ausonius was in his grave, resembled him rather than S. Paulinus. Yet here and there in the letters of Sidonius we meet with a man who remained in the world, yet was not of it, who, without acting literally on the command to forsake all things for Christ, strove to live in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. The character of one of these hidden saints,[1] a certain Vectius, might have been drawn by the author of the *Serious Call*. He was a man of illustrious rank and great fortune, but he had learnt the secret of "using the world as not abusing it." He has all the spirit of an anchoret under the soldier's cloak, and regards his position as a trust rather than a property.[2] The spirit of their master had spread among his serfs and clients. They are as obedient and dutiful as he is gentle and considerate. He has still all the tastes of the noble of his time; he wears the proper dress of his rank; he has a pride in horse and falcon and hound, and the stately serenity of wealth. He maintains a severe but clement dignity. He joins the hunt, but he does not eat the game. His hours are often spent in reading the Scriptures and chanting the Psalms. An only daughter, whom he tends with a mother's tenderness, consoles him in his widowhood. Sidonius adds that, with all deference to his own order, if he could find such graces in his friends, he would prefer the priestly character to the priest. Sidonius, although he did not withhold his admiration from the monastic life, and wrote an elegy on Abraham,[3] the Eastern solitary who settled in Auvergne, was, after all, one of that class of prelates who, having been trained in worldly society, believed in a Christianity which kept in touch with the world, to renovate it and to govern it.

[1] Sid. *Ep.* iv. Ct. Law's *Serious Call*, c. 8.

[2] Sid. *Ep.* iv. 9, putes eum propriam domum non possidere, sed potius administrare.

[3] *Ep.* vii. 17.

Apollinaris Sidonius had reached his forty-second year[1] when, by the popular voice, he was called to undertake the episcopal oversight of the diocese of Auvergne.[2] He had been till then the most typical representative of the aristocratic caste, Christian in profession, but pagan in sentiment and training. He had considered it his mission to deepen the pride of rank and the pride of culture. He became suddenly one of the most devoted pastors and spiritual governors, sharing the dangers and miseries of his flock in the Visigothic invasion, imprisoned by Euric for his devotion, passionately lamented by his people after his death. There is no record of the circumstances of this great change.[3] Yet the contrast between the life of the worldly aristocrat and the Christian bishop is very marked. We have seen the pictures of daily life at the great senator's country seat. Far different was the life of the chiefs of the Church.[4] The bishop lived in the chief town of his diocese, with doors always open. In the early morning hours he received all comers, heard complaints, composed differences, performed many of the duties of a civil magistrate.[5] He celebrated Mass, preached and taught the people in church. He had important functions in connection with the municipal council. If his episcopal seat lay near the court of a German prince, the bishop had the task of conciliating the new barbarian power,[6] and of maintaining good relations between it and

[1] The year 472 or 471 for the commencement of his episcopate is inferred from a passage in *Ep.* vi. 1, to Lupus of Troyes; the letter, written evidently soon after the ordination of Sidonius, speaks of Lupus as having completed novem quinquennia . . . in apostolica sede. Lupus became bishop in 427. Cf. Luetjohann's ed. of *Sid.* Ind Pers.; Germain's *Apoll. Sid.* p. 19 n.; Chaix, i. 439.

[2] *Ep.* v. 3, utpote cui indignissimo tantae professionis pondus impactum est; iii. 1; vi. 7.

[3] *v.* Fertig, *Apoll. Sid.* Abth. ii. 6.

[4] Guizot, *Civ. en France*, i. 102.

[5] F. de Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* 36, 38; Fauriel, i. 376; cf. *Nov. Maj.* tit. xii.; *C. Th.* xvi. 10, 19, xv. 8, 2. For multifarious business brought before bishops cf. Sid. *Ep.* vi. 2, 4, 9, 10.

[6] *Ep.* vi. 12, the Burgundian king used to praise the dinners of Bishop Patiens; cf. Ampère, *Hist. Lit.* ii. 202 on the relations of S. Avitus with the Burgundians.

the Gallo-Roman population. He had to superintend the cultivation of the lands of his see, and sometimes he even worked on them with his own hands. The narrow space left by these active occupations would, if he were a scholar and a thinker, be devoted to the theological or philosophical discussions of the time, and he might, in that age of controversy, have to define his position in some treatise on free-will and grace, or on the nature of the soul.[1] The real leader of the municipal community in the fifth century, alike in temporal and in spiritual things, was often the great Churchman. The power of the senatorial class, with all their broad lands and culture, did not extend usually beyond the serfs of their estates.

There were two distinct classes of bishops in the Gallic Church of the fifth century, the monastic and the aristocratic, and the special qualities of both were needed by the circumstances of the time. The monasteries of Southern Gaul were not only devoted to an ascetic religious life, but to learning and theological inquiry. They were the real centres of the intellectual movements of the age; and the great house of Lérins[2] had a special fame not only for its sanctity but for its dialectic. Its atmosphere seems to have been favourable to freedom of thought on the great questions which then agitated Western Christendom. It was the home of a Pelagian or semi-Pelagian school of thought which long repelled the extreme Augustinian views on the relation of Divine grace to human will. And it gave many eminent prelates to the Gallic church, Faustus[3] of Riez, Lupus[4] of Troyes, Eucherius[5] of Lyons, and Hilary[6] of Arles.

[1] Cf. *Ep.* of Faustus of Riez, printed before the *de Statu An.* of Claud. Mamert.

[2] For an account of Lérins and its foundation, cf. Fertig, *Apoll. Sid.* ii. 46, 47; Guizot, *Civ. en France*, i. 121, 165; Chaix, *Apoll. Sid.* i. 419; Fauriel, i. 403.

[3] Krusch. Praef. in *Faustum*, p. liv.; Sidon. *Carm.* xvi.; Gennad. *de Scrip. Eccl.* 85.

[4] Sid. *Carm.* xvi. 111; *Ep.* vi. 1.

[5] *Carm.* xvi. 115; Gennad. *de Scrip. Eccl.* 63.

[6] *Carm.* xvi. 115; Gennad. *de Scrip. Eccl.* 69.

But the aristocratic bishop was perhaps even more needed at that time of social and political disorganisation. He was often very imperfectly equipped with theological learning. But he had other qualifications which the people of a diocese in the path of the invaders might naturally consider more valuable. He had wealth for sacred or charitable objects, to build or renovate churches,[1] to redeem the captive among the barbarians, to relieve the miseries of the lower classes who were suffering from the disorder and insecurity caused by the invasions. He had also the authority derived from rank, and the social tact which made him able to defend his flock against the violence of the German chiefs, or the not less dreaded oppression of the Roman officials. Sometimes a high-minded aristocrat might accept the office from a sense of duty to the population among whom he lived. Sometimes it was forced upon him by their clamour.[2] But the correspondence of Sidonius leaves no doubt that the episcopal chair was often an object of ambition and intrigue of the lowest kind. At an election to the vacant see of Châlon in 470, there were three candidates supported by rival factions.[3] One was a man of no character, but of ancient lineage. Another was an Apicius who had bought the support of a party by the skill of his cook. A third had promised his supporters, in case of his election, their reward out of the estates of the see. Although the election of a bishop in those days was still in theory by the popular voice, the presiding bishops of the province exercised a preponderant influence; and in this case, to the confusion of the rival partisans, Patiens and his episcopal colleagues braved all clamour, and laid their hands on the Archdeacon John, a modest man, who

[1] As Patiens of Lyons did, Sid. *Ep.* ii. 10; cf. Fertig, iii. p. 36, and Perpetuus of Tours, Sid. *Ep.* iv. 18; cf. Greg. Tur. ii. 14. The latter gives the dimensions of the Basilica minutely.

[2] Cf. Sid. *Ep.* iv. 24; *Life of S Ambrose* by Paulinus, c. iii.

[3] Sid. *Ep.* iv. 25.

had no support, except from his own blameless character. At another election, to the see of Bourges, Sidonius himself presided.[1] He found a great number of rival candidates, among whose claims the people were hopelessly divided, and one of whom had actually used bribery to gain support. At their request he undertook to nominate a person for the sacred office, and he justified his choice in a harangue which is a very valuable relic of the times. Sidonius, putting aside all the popular candidates, gave his voice for a certain Simplicius, who was not then in Holy Orders, but a soldier, and a man of great official rank and wealth, whose character was highly respected, and who had proved his devotion by munificence in the cause of the Church.[2] The nominee of Sidonius was accepted apparently without a murmur.

The aristocratic bishop may not have been a learned theologian, but he often showed himself the man for the times, by great qualities of leadership and by princely generosity. Sidonius himself, as bishop of Auvergne, more than atoned by his courage and devotion for the literary vanity and frivolity of his early life. The Gothic power had closed round his native district, which proudly maintained a hopeless resistance.[3] Ecdicius, a son of Avitus, and brother-in-law of the bishop, raised and equipped an armed force at his own expense, and performed prodigies of valour against the Goths. But the attacks were renewed again and again. The walls of the city of Auvergne were crumbling, and famine was threatening the defenders.[4] While Ecdicius headed the sorties against

[1] Sid. *Ep.* vii. 9. Note the words: neque enim valuissemus aliquid in commune consulere, nisi judicii sui faciens plebs lenita jacturam, sacerdotali se potius judicio subdidisset.

[2] *Ib.* vii. 9, hic vobis ecclesiam juvenis miles . . . extruxit.

[3] *Ib.* iii. 3; the character of Ecdicius is one of the noblest of his class. He had not only a high military spirit which was rare among the nobles of the period, but he was a man of lavish generosity. Like Bishop Patiens he fed the starving people of Burgundy at his own expense; *v.* Greg. Tur. ii. 24.

[4] *Ep.* vii. 7, macri jejuniis praeliatores.

the enemy, Sidonius by his high spirit and his eloquence sustained and animated the courage of his flock. As a Catholic, no doubt he was fighting to ward off the encroachments of intolerant Arianism.[1] But the indignant tone in which he upbraids the bishop who finally surrendered the liberties of Auvergne to Euric, reveals the passionate patriotism of the Celt and the pride of the Roman noble.[2] His generosity was equal to his courage. Gregory of Tours had heard a tale of the good bishop selling his silver plate to relieve the necessities of his flock.[3] Another bishop, Patiens of Lyons, was famous in his time throughout all Gaul for his princely liberality. When the crops in his diocese had been burnt up in the ravages of the Goths,[4] he sent supplies, at his own cost, among the famishing population. His waggons, laden with grain, crowded all the roads, and his barges were seen everywhere along the Saône and the Rhone.[5] Arles and Riez, Avignon and Orange, Viviers and Valence, were supported by his bounty. He was also, like Perpetuus of Tours, a great church builder and restorer.[6] Sidonius has celebrated the splendour of marbles and gold which he lavished on his new basilica at Lyons.[7]

The Gallic bishops of that day were not less distinguished for learning and eloquence than for munificence

[1] For the massacre or expulsion of Catholic bishops by Euric see Sid. *Ep.* vii. 6, regem Gothorum quamquam sit ob virium merita terribilis, non tam Romanis moenibus quam legibus Christianis insidiaturum pavesco; Greg. Tur. *H. Fr.* ii. 25.

[2] *Ep.* vii. 7, to Graecus, bishop of Marseilles. This letter shows Sidonius at his best, both in spirit and in style; cf. Fertig, *Sid.* ii. p. 11.

[3] *Hist. Franc.* ii. 22.

[4] Sid. *Ep.* vi. 12; cf. Greg. Tur. *Hist. Fr.* ii. 24. Fertig (ii. 25) points out that Gibbon notices the charity of Ecdicius in this famine, but makes no mention of the similar generosity of Patiens the bishop. Gregory gives a larger place to Ecdicius.

[5] Sid. *Ep.* vi. 12, vidimus angustas tuis frugibus vias.

[6] *Ib.* ii. 10. On Perpetuus cf. iv. 18.

[7] See also the verses composed by Sidonius on the new basilica at Tours, built by Perpetuus, *Ep.* iv. 18; and its description, Greg. Tur. ii. 14. It is uncertain to whom Patiens dedicated his church at Lyons. Cf. Chaix, *Apoll. Sid.* i. 32; Migne's note to ii. 10. Patiens built churches in many other places, Sid. *Ep.* vi. 12, omitto per te plurimis locis basilicarum fundamenta consurgere.

and power of leadership. The pulpit in the fifth century was a great force, and the great prelates were generally great preachers. Not the least celebrated orator of his time was S. Remi, the apostle of the Franks, whose style Sidonius praises in language of ingenious and alliterative exaggeration, and whose declamations were eagerly read and transcribed in Auvergne.[1] The rhetoric of the great bishop of Rheims is known to us only by the words of his famous appeal to Clovis at his baptism.[2] A similar fate has befallen the writings of Euphronius of Autun, who had a great reputation for theological learning, and was the author of a memoir on the prodigies of the terrible year of Attila's invasion.[3] No prelate of that age rendered more various and splendid service than Lupus of Troyes,[4] in his episcopate extending over half a century. He rose to be abbot of Lérins in his early manhood. In the first years of his episcopate he accompanied S. Germanus on a mission against the Pelagian heresy in Britain.[5] It was believed that his sanctity and dignity had saved Troyes from the fury of Attila. He was also a student with a fine library, and Sidonius had a great respect for his literary judgment. His eloquence seemed to his contemporaries to recall the golden age of Gallic rhetoric.[6] Faustus of Riez was the greatest and the most daring thinker among the Churchmen of his time. Like Pelagius, he was a native of Britain.[7] From his early youth he was devoted to the study of philosophy, nor did he abandon it when he became a monk of Lérins. After being head of that community, he succeeded

[1] Sid. *Ep.* ix. 7. An Arvernian on a visit to the north had managed to bring a copy of S. Remi's *Declamations* back from Rheims, and presented it to his bishop, who read it aloud to an admiring circle.

[2] Greg. Tur. ii. 31, adora quod incendisti ; incende quod adorasti. Gregory notices the rhetoric.

[3] Sid. *Ep.* ix. 2 ; cf. Chaix, *Sid. Ap.* ii. p. 75 ; Idat. *Chron.* ad a. 451.

[4] Sid. *Ep.* vii. 13 ; viii. 11.

[5] *Acta S. Jul.* quoted in Index Pers. to Mommsen's ed. of *Sidonius*, p. 429 ; cf. Prosp. *Chron.* ad a. 429.

[6] Sid. *Ep.* viii. 11, § 2.

[7] *Ib.* ix. 9, legi volumina tua quae Riochatus . . . Britannis tuis pro te reportat ; v. Krusch. Praef. liv. ; cf. Gennad. *de Scrip. Eccl.* 86.

Maximus, his predecessor in the abbacy at Lérins, as bishop of Riez. He was a man of the most saintly life, and in his days of fame and power he never relaxed the abstinence and austerity of the monastic discipline.[1] His sermon, at the consecration of the new basilica at Lyons, carried away his audience. Yet he was the great heretic of the day, and the recognised leader of the powerful semi-Pelagian school in Southern Gaul. His work on Free Grace was assailed with ferocious clamour, and was condemned by Pope Gelasius.[2] But his aberrations from the strict line of orthodoxy were even more serious. He maintained, in a work published anonymously,[3] that the soul was a corporeal substance, and that to attribute an immaterial nature to it was to invest it with a quality which belongs only to God. This heresy was indeed not a novelty. It had been expounded by Tertullian;[4] it had found support from S. Jerome[5] and Cassian,[6] and it seemed to S. Augustine to demand a serious and elaborate refutation.[7] The treatise of Faustus drew forth a reply from Mamertus Claudianus, which, in its subtlety and formal elaboration of proof, has the tone and atmosphere of the scholastic theology of the Middle Ages. Claudian's treatise *de Statu Animae* was dedicated to Sidonius, and the honour was acknowledged in a letter[8] which leaves a grave doubt whether the good bishop understood the question at issue. He has a genuine admiration for Mam. Claudianus, although it is expressed in language of absurd extravagance. But there is not a hint in his

[1] Sid. *Ep.* ix. 3, cum novae dignitatis obtentu rigorem veteris disciplinae non relaxaveris.

[2] Krusch. Praef. lix. For specimens of his preaching, v. *Sermones ad Monachos*, Migne, t. lviii., esp. ii. and iv.

[3] v. *Ep.* prefixed to Mam. Claudian. *de Statu An.*; *Ep.* xx. in the collected *Ep.* of Faustus.

[4] Tertull. *de An.* c. 5, 7.

[5] Hieron. *Com. in Libr. Job*, 25.

[6] Cassian, *Collat.* vii. 13, licet enim pronuntiemus nonnullas esse spiritales naturas, ut sunt angeli etc., ipsa quoque anima nostra vel certa aer iste subtilis, tamen incorporeae nullatenus aestimandae sunt.

[7] Nourrisson, *La Philosophie de S. Augustin*, t. i. p. 170.

[8] Sid. *Ep.* iv. 3.

letters that he regarded Faustus with any feeling but that of the greatest esteem and affection. It must be said to the honour of Sidonius, that he chose and loved his friends for their character, quite apart from their opinions; and he seems to have had an impartial regard for both the combatants in this controversy.

The great value of Sidonius to the historical student is that he is so broad and tolerant, and that his charity embraces so many men of various character and ideals. He has even a good word for the Jews, as men and apart from their faith.[1] His own associations would naturally incline him to admire the prince bishop, with noble ancestry and a taste for letters. But he has a profound reverence for the ascetic fervour of those who withdrew from the world to the monastic life, or to the greater loneliness of the hermitage in the forest. He had visited Faustus at Lérins,[2] and seen with admiration the spirit and discipline of that great society. In one of his poems he celebrates that Iona of the Mediterranean, as we may call it, whose arid sands had been the home of Honoratus, Eucher, and Hilary, all great luminaries of the Church of Gaul in his early youth.[3] He sends an account of an episcopal election to Domnulus,[4] who had retired to one of the monasteries in the Jura. In another letter he acknowledges the affectionate sympathy of an abbot named Chariobaudus,[5] and sends him a cowl to protect him against the chills of the midnight service. Close to his own episcopal town of Auvergne, a solitary from the East had settled in a hermitage.[6] He had suffered per-

[1] Sid. *Ep.* iii. 4, Gozolas natione Judaeus, cujus mihi quoque esset persona cordi, si non esset secta despectui. Gozolas carried his letters; cf. iv. 5.

[2] *Ib.* ix. 3; v. Germain's *Sid. Apoll.* p. 148, n. 5.

[3] *Carm.* xvi. 91. Honoratus and Hilary became bishops of Arles, and Eucher, bishop of Lyons.

[4] *Ep.* iv. 25, nunc ergo Jurensia si te remittunt jam monasteria, in quae solitus ascendere jam caelestibus supernisque praeludis habitaculis, etc.; cf. Greg. Tur. *vit. Patrum*, i. For the monasteries in the Jura, cf. Chaix, ii. 218.

[5] *Ep.* vii. 16.

[6] *Ib.* vii. 17; Greg. Tur. *Hist Fr.* ii. 21, and *vit. Patrum*, iii.

secution in his native country on the Euphrates; thence he had passed into Egypt, and lived among the hermits of the Thebaid. He was a man of superhuman sanctity, and men believed that he had superhuman powers. He could put demons to flight, give sight to the blind, heal marvellously inveterate disease. His powerful personality drew others like-minded to him. A monastery was built which became the centre of high religious feeling in Auvergne. Thither came the bishop for calm and meditation in the tempest of the Gothic invasion. When Auvergne had yielded to the Goth, thither came Euric's governor, the Count Victorius, and on high festivals the monastery offered its modest hospitality to the great nobles and officials of the district.[1] But the good abbot was at length worn out with care and austerity, and when he was on his dying bed, Victorius the governor bent over him weeping, to close his eyes. His bishop wrote his elegy, in which, through all the pedantry, we catch the tones of a real reverence and affection for a saintly life.

This is not a history of the religious life of the time. Our main theme is rather the manners and tone of the caste who thought far more of Virgil and Statius than of S. John or S. Paul. Yet it would be a very maimed and misleading view of the age of Sidonius which confined itself to the gay country-house life of Avitacum or Prusianum, and ignored the great spiritual movements, the fearless quest of truth, the world-forgetting piety, which, when society seemed sinking into the abyss, were the promise of a new and better time. In Sidonius the old and the new order meet. He thought himself a Roman of the Romans, the last champion of an immemorial culture threatened by the rising tide of barbarism.[2] He

[1] Greg. Tur. *vit. Patrum*, iii. Gregory narrates how, on one of these occasions, the guests were miraculously supplied with wine.

[2] Sid. *Ep.* ii. 10, tantum increbuit multitudo desidiosorum, ut, nisi vel paucissimi quique meram Latiaris linguae proprietatem de

ended his life as a devoted Christian pastor who still clung to the great traditions of ancient Rome, but had learned to believe in the grander mission of the Christian Church.

trivialium barbarismorum rubigine vindicaveritis, eam brevi abolitam defleamus interitamque; sic omnes nobilium sermonum purpurae per incuriam vulgi decoloraluntur.

# BOOK III

## THE FAILURE OF ADMINISTRATION, AND THE RUIN OF THE MIDDLE CLASS, AS REVEALED BY THE THEODOSIAN CODE

# CHAPTER I

## THE DISORGANISATION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

We have hitherto been occupied with the condition of Roman society in the West as it is revealed to us in its literary remains. But Symmachus, Ausonius, Sidonius and their class throw little light on the condition of other classes than their own, or on the deep-seated and inveterate diseases which for generations had been undermining the strength of the imperial system. The general tendency of modern inquiry has been to discover in the fall of that august and magnificent organisation, not a cataclysm, precipitated by the impact of barbarous forces, but a process slowly prepared and evolved by internal and economic causes. It is probable that the barbarian invasions of the fifth century were not more formidable than those of the third, which were triumphantly repelled by the Illyrian Caesars, or than those of the fourth, which were rolled back by the genius of Julian and the ferocious energy of Valentinian. The question why the invasions of the fifth century succeeded, while the earlier failed, is best answered by an appeal to the Imperial Code. In the voluminous enactments issued from Constantine to Majorian, the student has before him a melancholy diagnosis of the maladies which, by a slow and inevitable process of decay, were exhausting the strength of Roman society. He will see municipal liberty and self-government dying out, the upper class

cut off from the masses by sharp distinctions of wealth and privilege, yet forbidden to bear arms,[1] and deprived of all practical interest in public affairs. He will find that not only has an Oriental monarchy taken the place of the principate of Augustus, but that an almost Oriental system of caste has made every social grade and every occupation practically hereditary, from the senator to the waterman on the Tiber, or the sentinel at a frontier post; and that human nature is having its revenge in wholesale flight from a cruel servitude and the chaos of administration. It will be seen that in a society in which poverty is almost branded with infamy,[2] poverty is steadily increasing and wealth becoming more insolent and aggressive; that the disinherited, in the face of an omnipotent government, are carrying brigandage even up to the gates of Rome; that parents are selling their children into slavery; that public buildings are falling into decay; that the service on the great post roads is becoming disorganised. At a time when every frontier was threatened, it will be found that the frontier posts are being abandoned, that there is wholesale desertion from the ranks of the army; while in the failure of free recruits, the slaves have to be called to arms. But the unscientific and inefficient financial system will chiefly attract the notice of the historical inquirer. The collection of imposts in kind opened the door to every species of corruption. Still more fatal to pure administration was the system which left to the municipal class the assessment and collection of the revenue in their district. That doomed order are at once branded as the worst oppressors, and invested with the melancholy glory of being the martyrs of a ruinous system of finance.[3]

[1] Aurel. Vict. *de Caes.* c. 33, *Gallienus*: primus ipse, metu sacordiae suae, ne imperium ad optimos nobilium transferretur, senatum militia vetuit, etiam adire exercitum: *C. Th.* xv. 15, 1.

[2] See M. Duruy's Memoire on Honestiores and Humiliores in the later Empire, in *Hist. Rom.* vi. 643.

[3] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, v. 18; cf.

Their lingering fate, recorded in 192 edicts,[1] a tragedy prolonged through more than five generations, is one of the most curious examples of obstinate and purblind legislation, contending hopelessly with inexorable laws of society and human nature. In that contest the middle or bourgeois class was almost extinguished, Roman financial administration was paralysed, and at its close the real victors and survivors were the great landholders, surrounded by their serfs and dependants. A volume might be written on the corruption and cruel oppression of the officials of the treasury, servile to the great, tyrannical to the poor, and calmly defying all the menaces of the emperor in their unchecked career of rapacity. The last and deepest impression which the inquirer will carry with him, as he rises from a study of the Theodosian Code, is that fraud and greed are everywhere triumphant, that the rich are growing richer and more powerful, while the poor are becoming poorer and more helpless, and that the imperial government, inspired with the best intentions, has lost all control of the vast machine.

Yet amid all the perverse errors of legislation and the hopeless corruption of the financial service, the candid reader of the Code cannot help feeling that the central authority was keenly alive to its duties, and almost overwhelmed by its responsibilities. It is a superficial view of the time which dwells on the weakness of a Honorius, a Valentinian, or an Anthemius. The Emperor was, indeed, in theory omnipotent; but as a matter of fact he had to depend on his officials, both to advise his decisions and to carry them out. He was assisted by a council of experienced men of high official

iii. 50. M. F. de Coulanges (*L'Inv. Germ.* p. 58, n. 1) says: On remarquera que Salvien accuse moins les fonctionnaires impériaux que les magistrats municipaux. Yet cf. *de Gub. Dei*, iv. 21, quid est aliud quorundam, quos taceo, praefectura quam praeda? v. 25, quibus enim aliis rebus Bacaudae facti sunt nisi . . . improbitatibus judicum, etc.

[1] *C. Th.* xii. tit. i.

rank,[1] some of whom had probably governed great provinces, and who knew the Roman world, if any men did. Moreover, it is plain, from the very wording of many of the rescripts,[2] that they were suggested by the prefect or governor to whom they are addressed; and one can hardly be wrong in believing that in many of these last efforts of Roman statesmanship, so sympathetic, so strangely rhetorical, so full at times of honest indignation, we may have the report of a conscientious governor returned to him in the imperative form of an edict. The minute and circumstantial description of oppression and wrong could hardly have come from any one who had not heard the tale from the sufferers themselves.[3] Occasionally, though too seldom it is to be feared, such complaints came directly to the ears of the Emperor. The mass of legislation for the relief of the province of Africa in the reign of Honorius was the result of at least two deputations commissioned to represent its grievances;[4] and so determined was the Emperor to remedy the abuses complained of, that he appointed two of the most experienced and illustrious ex-prefects with full powers to deal with the disorders of the province.[5]

The Roman world had for ages regarded the Emperor as an earthly Providence;[6] and to the end such was the

[1] The Council was called consistorium, the members proceres, consiliarii, comites consistoriani. *C. Th.* xi. 39, 5; ix. 14, 3 (Godefroy t. iii. p. 108.); cf. Spartian *vit. Hadrian.* c. 18; Amm. Marc. xv. 5, 12; xxxi. 12, 10; *C. Th.* vi. 12; cf. F. de Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 13; Duruy, vi. 574.

[2] We frequently meet such phrases as Sublimis Excellentiae tuae saluberrimam suggestionem secuti; cf. *Nov. Th.* 45, 47.

[3] Cf. several of the Novellae addressed to Albinus, e.g. *Nov. Th.* 22, and the description of the fraud and violence of the discussores, *Nov. Valent.* 7.

[4] The emperors Gratian and Valentinian permitted the provinces, after due deliberation, to send three delegates to represent their case to the government, *C. Th.* xii. 12, 7. The Curiales and Defensores sometimes tried to prevent the appeal of the provincials, xi. 8, 3; ix. 26, 2, with Godefroy's note. The deputation from Africa is mentioned, xii. 1, 166. Cf. xii. 6, 27; Sym. *Ep.* iv. 46, recommending a similar deputation from Campania, in 395; *C. Th.* xi. 28, 2.

[5] *Ib.* vii. 4, 33.

[6] See F. de Coulanges, *La Gaule Rom.* pp. 177 *sqq.*

conception of their office which was entertained even by the weakest emperors. Valentinian III. proclaims that it is his business to "provide for the peace and tranquillity of the provinces";[1] Anthemius says that he is called "to face the storms of overwhelming calamities."[2] "It is our care," says the Emperor Martian,[3] "to provide for the welfare of the human race." Yet there are in the later edicts many signs of conscious weakness. Their tone is frequently argumentative and rhetorical. There is an absence of the trenchant brevity with which Constantine or the elder Valentinian were wont to declare their will. It is singular to find an edict against Jews, Samaritans, and pagans opening with an argument for the being of a God.[4] Elsewhere we meet with philosophical reflections on the innate criminal tendencies of human nature,[5] the hopeless selfishness of the rich,[6] or on the functions of government. The Emperor Majorian in one law describes, with great vividness and passionate force, as if for posterity, the crushing weight of taxation and the hopeless position of the farmer.[7] Many of these edicts betray the style of the school rhetorician, and yet there is in many of them the ring of genuine sympathy for misery, which the imperial author more than half confesses that he is impotent to relieve. It is impossible to read some of these laws in which the Emperor describes "the agitations and anxieties of his serene mind,"[8] without a feeling that

[1] *Nov. Valent.* tit. viii. *ad init.*

[2] *Leg. Anthem.* tit. i.

[3] *Nov. Mart.* ii., curae nobis est utilitati humani generis providere: nam id die ac nocte prospicimus ut universi qui sub nostro imperio vivunt et armarum praesidio ab hostili impetu muniantur, ac in pace libero otio ac securitate potiantur.

[4] *Nov. Th.* iii. quis enim tam mente captus, etc.

[5] *Nov. Valent.* v., noxiae mentes caeco semper in facinus furore rapiuntur.

[6] *Nov. Th.* xxi., domesticis tantum compendiis obsequentes bonum commune destituunt.

[7] *Nov. Maj.* tit. iv.

[8] *Nov. Th.* and *Valent.* 51, quae ergo his angustiis remedia providenda sunt mens nostrae Serenitatis exaestuat.

he is probably the man most to be pitied in the Empire.

Of all departments of administration, probably none caused the Emperor greater anxiety than that concerned with the food-supplies of the capital. To provide corn, pork, wine, and oil for the populace had for ages been one of the first tasks of the government.[1] How dangerous any failure in this department might be to the peace of the city, and the safety of the upper classes, we can see clearly in the letters of Symmachus.[2] While the Goths were marching through Samnium and Bruttium, or Gildo or Heraclian were stopping the corn-fleets, or the Vandals were occupying the ports of Africa, the government had to provide for the daily subsistence of a great population. An army of public servants incorporated in hereditary guilds, Naviculariі, Pistores, Suarii, Pecuarii, were charged with the duty of bringing up supplies and preparing them for consumption.[3] It is evident, from the legislation of Honorius,[4] that the stress on this department was very severe in the early part of his reign, owing to the troubles of the Gildonic revolt in Africa, and again from the famine of 410. But the difficulty reappears more than once in the laws of subsequent years.[5] One of the hardest tasks of the government was to prevent the members of these guilds from deserting or evading their hereditary obligations. It is well known that the tendency of the later Empire

[1] Marq. *Röm. Staatsverwaltung*, ii. 133. The chief authorities for the distribution of oil, wine, and flesh-meat are Aug. Hist. *vit. Sep. Sev.* 23, *Alex. Sev.* 22, 26, *Aurelian*, 48, *C. Th.* xiv. 24, 1, with Godefroy's notes; *C. Th.* xiv. 4, 3.

[2] Sym. *Ep.* vi. 18, 26, 12.

[3] Id. *Rel.* 14, noverat (Aeternitas vestra) horum corporum ministerio tantae urbis onera sustineri. Hic lanati pecoris invector est, ille ad victum populi cogit armentum, hos suillae carnis tenet functio, pars urenda lavacris ligna conportat, etc. Cf. Paratitl. of Godefroy to *C. Th.* xiv. tit. 2 and 4; Wallon, *Hist. de l'Esclavage*, iii. 173.

[4] *C. Th.* xiii. 5, 34, 35; Zos. vi. 11, describes the effect of the closing of the African ports by Heraclian, λιμὸν ἐνέσκηψε τῇ πόλει χαλεπώτερον τοῦ προτέρου.

[5] *Nov. Th.* 39, 40.

was to stereotype society, by compelling men to follow the occupation of their fathers, and preventing a free circulation among different callings and grades of life. The man who brought the grain of Africa to the public stores at Ostia, the baker who made it into loaves for distribution, the butchers who brought pigs from Samnium, Lucania, or Bruttium, the purveyors of wine and oil, the men who fed the furnaces of the public baths, were bound to their callings from one generation to another.[1] It was the principle of rural serfdom applied to social functions. Every avenue of escape was closed. A man was bound to his calling not only by his father's but by his mother's condition.[2] Men were not permitted to marry out of their guild.[3] If the daughter of one of the baker caste married a man not belonging to it, her husband was bound to her father's calling.[4] Not even a dispensation obtained by some means from the imperial chancery,[5] not even the power of the Church[6] could avail to break the chain of servitude. The corporati, it is true, had certain privileges,[7] exemptions, and allowances, and the heads of some of the guilds might be raised to the rank of "Count." But their property, like their persons, was at the mercy of the State.[8] If they parted with an estate, it remained liable for the service with which the vendor was charged.

To maintain such a system, and to counteract the endless attempts at evasion and corruption to which its galling restraints gave rise, required constant vigilance,

[1] Wallon, iii. p. 174. *C. Th.* xiii. 5, 35, universos quos navicularine conditioni obnoxios invenit antiquitas, praedictae functioni conveniet famulari.

[2] *C. Th.* xiv. 4, 8, ad munus pristinum revocentur, tam qui paterno quam materno genere inveniuntur obnoxii.

[3] *Ib.* xiv. 3, 21.

[4] *Ib.* xiv. 3, 14.

[5] *Ib.* xiv. 3, 20, si quo casu, vel occultis vel ambitiosis hoc precibus elicuerit, etc.; cf. l. 21, etiamsi nostra elicita fuerint aliqua subreptione rescripta; cf. xiv. 3, 4.

[6] *Ib.* xiv. 3, 11; cf. *Nov. Th.* 26.

[7] *Ib.* xiv. 2; *v.* Paratitlon.

[8] *Ib.* xiii. 6, 6; cf. l. 9, which recalls a navicular property to the function, even when the sale took place twenty years before.

which was as constantly defeated. The naviculariі seem to have exceeded the very liberal allowance of time for their voyage, which was, under special circumstances, extended to two years.[1] While the city was on the verge of famine, or when supplies were urgently needed for the army in Gaul, the captains often lingered in port on any pretext,[2] or made circuitous voyages in pursuit of their own profit.[3] And the government was obliged to order greater despatch, and to prohibit the practice of private trading in which captains engaged, to the disorganisation of the service. Sometimes the captains entered their ships under another name, probably that of some person of influence, in order to escape their responsibilities.[4] The functionaries, whose duty it was to expedite transport, were bribed to wink at malversation or neglect. Estates liable for the function were withdrawn from it by fraudulent sales.[5] In the year 450[6] the guild of naviculariі had been so reduced in numbers by the desertion of its members to other callings that the Emperor was obliged to order the restoration of all persons and estates to the function from which they had been withdrawn. Another edict of 455 orders the return to their various guilds of all corporati who have deserted their proper duties, in order to enter the army or the church.[7] A similar command had been issued in 412 to all governors of provinces to compel the return of all guildsmen of the city of Rome who had migrated from Italy.[8] This law, however, refers not to the stealthy evasion of onerous functions, but to the wholesale flight

[1] *C. Th.* xiii. 5, 26; cf. l. 21.

[2] *Ib.* xiii. 5, 34, a. 410.

[3] *Ib.* xiii. 5, 33. The penalty was death.

[4] *Ib.* xiii. 7, 2, multi naves suas diversorum (Potentum) nominibus et titulis tuentur.

[5] *Ib.* xiii. 6, 1.

[6] *Nov. Th.* 38. The naviculariі amnici referred to were the boatmen who conveyed the supplies up the Tiber.

[7] *Ib.* 26.

[8] *C. Th.* xiv. 2, 4; cf. xiv. 7, 2, of the same year, ordering the return of the nemesiaci, signiferi, cantabrariі, guilds connected with amusements or pagan rites and processions. See Godefroy's note.

of all ranks, which had taken place during the invasion of Alaric, and of which we have such vivid accounts from S. Jerome and Rutilius Namatianus.[1]

The effects of the Gothic invasion of Italy in the early years of the fifth century have left many deep traces on the Code. We can almost hear the distant sound of the advancing hordes in some of the enactments issued during the years of Stilicho's ascendency. There are laws relating to every part of the military system, and every part is revealing weaknesses. During the period of the later Empire, landed proprietors had to furnish recruits in proportion to the size of their estates.[2] These must have been drawn from the class of coloni, since the strictly servile class was excluded from the Roman army.[3] The Code in these years shows that recruits were urgently needed, not even the Emperor's own estates being exempted from the levy.[4] Yet we know that, at the time of the Gildonic war, the senators exerted their whole strength as a body to resist the call of the Emperor.[5] And the result of their efforts is seen in the enactments of 397, which gave them the option of paying twenty-five solidi for each recruit for whom they were liable.[6] The exclusion of senators from the army, and the prohibition of ordinary citizens to carry arms, had produced their inevitable result. The military spirit had almost died out among Romans. The army was swelled by corps of barbarian mercenaries, and the

[1] Hieron. *Ep.* cxxvii. §§ 4; cxxx. § 4; Rut. Nam. *It.* i. 331; Claudian. *de Bell. Get.* 217.

[2] F. de Coul. *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 145; *C. Th.* vii. 13, 7, of the year 375.

[3] *C. Th.* vii. 13, 8. They are coupled in this exclusion with cauponae, coqui, pistores, and persons employed in famosae tabernae.

[4] *Ib.* vii. 13, 12, ideoque ne patrimonium quidem nostrum a praestatione (*i.e.* tironum) immune esse patimur.

[5] Sym. *Ep.* vi. 62, legati ordinis ex usu actis omnibus reverterunt. Nam et tironum conquievit indictio et argenti nobis facta gratia est; cf. *Ep.* vi. 64.

[6] *C. Th.* vii. 13, 13. In the law of Valens and Gratian of 375 the pretium tironis was fixed at thirty-six solidi. The pretium fixed in the edict of 410, calling for recruits from the officiales judicum of Africa, is thirty; *C. Th.* vii. 13, 20.

highest military commands were held by Germans. Ever since the third century the military profession had been declining in the public esteem.[1] Recruits were branded on entering the service, as if they were slaves in an ergastulum.[2] The aversion to military service appears to have been growing. Towards the end of the fourth century the practice of self-mutilation to escape service had become so common that it had to be checked by the most cruel punishments.[3] In the years between 396 and 412, Honorius issued nine edicts on desertion and the concealment of deserters.[4] The crime seems to have prevailed in all parts of the Empire, but to have been specially rampant in Gaul and Africa. The agents of great proprietors and the smaller farmers were evidently glad, even in the face of very severe penalties, to shelter the absconding soldier on their estates for the sake of his labour.[5] Honorius does not, like his predecessors in 382, threaten to burn the offender alive.[6] But the increasing emphasis of his laws, together with the organised search which he instituted, indicates the magnitude and inveteracy of the evil.[7] Apparently proprietors or their agents were not deterred even by the danger of confiscation from disobeying laws so often repeated. For in 440, when the growth of the Vandal power in Africa urgently demanded an increase of the army, Theodosius and Valentinian III. were compelled to make the offence of concealing recruits or deserters by agents or coloni punishable by death.[8] Along all the frontiers of the

[1] Duruy, vii. p. 203.

[2] Godefroy's Paratitlon to *C. Th.* vii. t. 2, p. 254.

[3] *C. Th.* vii. 13, 4 and 5. That the proprietor from whose estate the recruit came was sometimes a party to the crime is implied in the words, dominus ejus qui non prohibet gravi condemnatione feriatur.

[4] *Ib.* vii. 18, 9-17. For deserters in Gaul at an earlier period cf. Spart. *vit. Pesc. Nig.* c. 3, desertores qui tunc innumeri Gallias vexabant, etc.

[5] *C. Th.* vii. 18, 12, actorem conscium severo supplicio damnandum esse censemus.

[6] *Ib.* vii. 18, 6, flammis scelera puniantur.

[7] *Ib.* vii. 18, 13.

[8] *Nov. Th.* 44.

Empire forts and castles had for centuries been erected, which were garrisoned by troops called *burgarii*,[1] who, like the guilds of the capital, were held in a species of hereditary servitude. Towards the end of the fourth century these frontier sentinels, especially in Gaul and Spain where their services were soon to be urgently needed, began to melt away. It is difficult to discover the influences which led to their dispersion. But in the year 409 an enactment of Theodosius and Honorius discloses in a startling way the denuded state of the frontier.[2]

In ordinary times slaves, along with tavern keepers, cooks, bakers, and persons following certain infamous callings, were excluded from the army.[3] It must have been a dire extremity which forced the Emperor, *contra hostiles impetus*, to call the slaves to arms by the offer of a bounty and the promise of emancipation.[4] In the same year the free provincials everywhere are appealed to, by their pride in liberty and love of country, to take arms.[5] It was the year in which Radagaisus with his Gothic army of 200,000 men swept down from the Alps on Lombardy and Tuscany. Only once before had Rome been driven to put arms in the hands of her slaves, to repel the advance of Hannibal after the battle of Cannae.[6] The urgency of the crisis is also seen in a law of 404, peremptorily requiring all possessores to contribute their share to the preparation and transport of

[1] On the fortification of the limes cf. *vit. Hadrian*, c. 12; on the defence of the Gallic frontier by Valentinian, Amm. Marc. xxviii. 2, 1; on the Limitanei Milites, with lands granted on condition of military service, *vit. Alex. Sev.* c. 58; *C. Th.* vii. 15, 1; Marq. *Röm. Staatsverwaltung*, ii. 591.

[2] *C. Th.* vii. 15, 1.

[3] *Ib.* vii. 13, 8.

[4] *Ib.* vii. 13, 16. This belongs to the year 406, as the names of the Coss. Arcadius and Probus show. On the date of the invasion of Radagaisus cf. Godefroy on *C. Th.* vii. 13, 16; Gibbon, c. 30; Prosp. *Chron.*; Zos. v. 26.

[5] *C. Th.* vii. 13, 17. They are promised ten solidi pacatis rebus. The bounty offered to slaves in l. 16 is two solidi.

[6] Liv. xxii. 57.

supplies for the army, under a penalty of four times the amount due by them, without any exemption even for the Emperor's own estates.[1]

At a time when the rapid movement of troops and government officials was a matter of the first importance, the great roads and the posting service seem to have been getting into a bad state.[2] There are more than ten edicts of Honorius on this subject from 395.[3] In another passage of the Code the Emperor says that the ruinous condition, into which the highways of the Italian prefecture have fallen, demands the exertions of all classes for their repair,[4] and he withdraws the immunity from this burden which former laws had conferred on the officials of "illustrious" rank. The regulations for the use of the imperial post had received close attention from Julian and Theodosius.[5] A special corps of imperial officers called *curiosi* were charged with the duty of seeing that these rules were not infringed.[6] But successive edicts show the difficulty of enforcing them. Honorius had once more to prohibit the abuse of the service. Even officers of illustrious rank had the privilege of using the *cursus publicus* withdrawn from them,[7] unless they were specially summoned by the Emperor. The magistri militim are warned that without special leave they will usurp the privilege at their peril.[8] The prefect of the city who has done so is told not to repeat his offence.[9] The use of imperial post-horses on

[1] *C. Th.* vii. 5, 2, in excoctione bucellati (soldier's bread), in translatione etiam annonae nullius excipiatur persona, videlicet ut ne nostra quidem Domus ab his habeatur immunis ; a. 404.

[2] Yet Apollinaris Sidonius travelled easily by the public service in the year 455 : *Ep.* i. 5, publicus cursus usui fuit utpote sacris apicibus accito.

[3] *C. Th.* viii. 5, 53-65.

[4] *Ib.* xv. 3, 4, propter immensas vastitates viarum, certatim studia cunctorum ad reparationem publici aggeris volumus festinare ; a. 399.

[5] *Ib.* viii. 5, 12-16 ; viii. 5, 46 *sqq.*

[6] *Ib.* vi. tit. 29.

[7] *Ib.* viii. 5, 54.

[8] *Ib.* viii. 5, 56.

[9] *Ib.* viii. 5, 55. Florentinus was one of the friends of Symmachus ; *Ep.* iv. 50, 50 ; Seeck, cxli.

cross roads is prohibited under a heavy fine.[1] From the words of the law of 401, this was evidently becoming a grievous abuse, and a heavy burden to the provincials, who had to provide additional horses to meet the strain.[2] One can well imagine that, in those troubled years, persons hurrying to remote districts, to look after their private affairs, would by bribes, or by the illegitimate influence of rank, obtain from the officials of the post facilities of travelling which were fatal to the regularity of the government service, and onerous to the provincials. At the same time there are indications that the efficiency of the service was declining. An edict of 404 implies that there was a failure in the supply of servants and officials on the great roads.[3] In Gaul and Spain the muleteers were being stealthily withdrawn [4] or liberated by the higher officials from the function to which they were bound.[5] The animals in the public stables were not being properly fed, owing to the dishonesty of those in charge.[6] Corruption had crept into every grade of the service, and in one law the heads of the department are ordered to cease from their exactions and conform to the rules of the ancient discipline.[7] The body of civil servants styled *curiosi*, as we have said, had as their chief function the superintendence of the posting service on the great roads,[8] specially with the object of preventing the abuse of the privilege of *evectio*. In addition to this, they were expected to visit remote districts, and keep the government informed of any suspicious move-

[1] *C. Th.* viii. 5, 59.

[2] *Ib.* viii. 5, 63, quoniam multos perspeximus inlicita praesumptione paraveredos vel parangarias postulare, etc.

[3] *Ib.* viii. 5, 65. The mancipes cursus publici, by a law of Gratian, could be absent from their station only for thirty days in the year, viii. 5, 36; cf. l. 51. They were servi publici, viii. 5, 58.

[4] *Ib.* viii. 5, 50, 58.

[5] *Ib.* viii. 5, 58, ideoque Judex qui sibi hoc vindicaverit, ut servum publicum liberet, unam lib. auri per homines singulos, officium quoque ejus, si legem supprimendo consenserit, simili poena multetur.

[6] *Ib.* viii. 5, 60.

[7] *Ib.* vi. 29, 9.

[8] *Ib.* vi. 29, 6, in which their functions are defined.

ments among the population. It is evident that a police of this kind in times of confusion was open to dangerous abuse. As a matter of fact these officers became so venal and oppressive that they had to be removed at one stroke from the province of Africa in 414.[1]

The withdrawal of the *curiosi* from Dalmatia and the adjoining regions in 415[2] throws an interesting light on the state of the country and the public service. During the stormy years of Alaric's incursions, numbers of people in the districts through which he passed were driven from their homes. Some fled to less disturbed parts of the province, and put themselves under the protection of the great proprietors, by whom they were often detained in a species of servitude.[3] Others took refuge in the islands which dot the upper part of the Adriatic. In the year 410[4] the Emperor Theodosius, probably in pursuance of a compact with Honorius, ordered a strict watch to be kept in all the ports of Dalmatia, to prevent any person not provided with letters from the Roman government from entering his dominions. This measure was taken expressly on account of the usurpations of Attalus and Constantine, and the occupation of the Western provinces by the barbarians.[5] To make this embargo effectual, Honorius distributed *curiosi* along the various points of communication between East and West, and these officers grossly abused their power by preventing people from seeking places of greater security, or by extorting bribes for permission to do so. The evil became so intolerable that by an order of 415 the *curiosi* were peremptorily removed from the districts which were plagued with such dangerous surveillance.[6]

[1] *C. Th.* vi. 29, 11.

[2] *Ib.* vi. 29, 12. On the importance of Dalmatia at this time see an excellent note of Godefroy's on this law.

[3] Cf. *ib.* v. 5, 2.

[4] *Ib.* vii. 16, 2.

[5] *Ib.* vii. 16, 2, hoc enim et tyrannici furoris et barbaricae feritatis occasio persuadet; v. Godefroy.

[6] *Ib.* vi. 29, 12; v. Godefroy's note.

Brigandage had long been a menacing evil in the Western world. Even in the middle of the fourth century the country districts of Italy had become so unsafe that throughout seven provinces the use of horses was forbidden,[1] not only to coloni and shepherds, but to proprietors, with specified exceptions, and their agents. At all times the shepherds of Samnium, Picenum, and Apulia were a wild and lawless race,[2] and easily passed into the ranks of the banditti who pillaged the remote sheep-farms or infested the high roads leading to the capital. And the bailiffs of the great estates appear to have been often in league with the brigands, whose spoils they shared, and to whom they gave facilities for concealment. A law of 383 threatens them with "flammae ultrices" for this crime.[3] In 391 the right of using arms, which by earlier laws was denied to civilians, was granted to all persons against brigands.[4] In a letter of Symmachus about this time,[5] he tells a friend that his usual migration to his country seat in Campania was prevented by the prevalence of brigandage in the neighbourhood of Rome. In an edict of 399[6] Honorius refuses the right of using horses, so necessary to their occupation, to the shepherds of Valeria and Picenum. The feeling about this temptation of the shepherd's life is curiously illustrated by a law of 409,[7] which warns all curiales, plebeians, and possessores against sending their sons to be nursed among shepherds. The terms of the edict imply that shepherd and brigand had come to be almost synonymous. But the bands of outlaws were recruited in Italy and Gaul from another

[1] *C. Th.* ix. 30, 1 and 2, a. 364. Brigandage existed in Aquitaine in the time of Ausonius (*Ep.* iv. 23). Cf. Sym. ii. 22, sed nunc intuta est latrociniis suburbanitas.

[2] Cf. *ib.* ix. 31, 1, si vero . . . quisquam nutriendos pastoribus (filios suos), societatem latronum videbitur confiteri.

[3] *C. Th.* ix. 29, 2.

[4] *Ib.* ix. 14, 2.

[5] *Ep.* ii. 22.

[6] *C. Th.* ix. 30, 5; *v.* Godefroy on this law.

[7] *Ib.* ix. 31, 1.

class, of whom something has already been said. The country districts seem to have been infested by men who had deserted from the standards, and who, in hiding from the officers of the law, betook themselves to plunder for support. Full power to crush these dangerous criminals is given to the provincials in a law of 403,[1] which classes deserters with *latrones;* and the edict of 406[2] orders the Pretorian prefect to inflict capital punishment on fugitive soldiers who have betaken themselves to this life of crime. From some later parts of the Code, which are supported by other authorities, there can be no doubt that the barbarian invasions let loose a great mass of desperadoes on the countries through which the invaders passed. Poor men who had lost everything were almost forced to join the gangs of marauders who swept over the country.[3] To open a way for such persons to return to an orderly life, the Emperor in 416[4] proclaimed a general amnesty for all this class of offences, for which he finds an excuse in the overwhelming calamities of the time.

In general the signs of growing impoverishment become more and more frequent, and the tone of the later edicts shows how deeply the Roman statesmen were impressed by the misery of the lower classes. A terrible famine, which raged throughout Italy in 450, had actually driven many of the poor to sell their children into slavery. An edict, issued on the suggestion of Aetius,[5] cancelled all such contracts, on repay-

[1] *C. Th.* vii. 18, 14, cuncti etenim adversus latrones publicos desertoresque militiae jus sibi sciant pro quiete communi exercendae publicae ultionis indultum. This law is a great confession of weakness in the government, cf. ix. 14, 2.

[2] *Ib.* vii. 18, 15.

[3] Cf. Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, v. § 24, c. 6; cf. Apoll. Sid. *Ep.* vi. 4, where a woman has been carried off by the Vargi. For brigandage in Gaul in 369 cf. Amm. Marc. xxviii. 2, 10; and Oros. vii. 25, 2. On the Scamarae in Noricum cf. Eugipp. *vit. S. Sev.* c. x. 2. The Bagaudae in Gaul and Spain had rather a different character and origin. The authorities are given in De Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 102, n. 1; cf. Fauriel, i. 186; Arnold, *Prov. Administration*, p. 163; Idat. *Chron.* ad a. 441, 443, 449.

[4] *C. Th.* xv. 14, 14.

[5] *Nov. Valent.* 11, notum est

ment to the purchaser of the price which the parents had accepted, with an addition of 20 per cent. The plunder of tombs for the sake of the costly marbles they contained seems to have become a common offence.[1] The edict of Valentinian III. on this subject is full of old Roman sentiment about the dead, and strangely resembles in tone that of Julian in which he deals with the same crime.[2] Its enormity, and perhaps its frequency, are indicated by the heavy penalties which were imposed, torture, death, or confiscation, according to the social grade of the criminal. Other indications of failing resources may be seen in the laws relating to public works and buildings.[3] Already in the reign of Constantine, the Emperor complains of the neglect[4] which was allowing them in many places to fall into decay. The authorities are required by Gratian and Theodosius to repair ancient buildings before undertaking the erection of new ones.[5] Honorius forbids the alienation, on any pretext, of municipal funds which have been long allocated to the restoration or decoration of public edifices.[6] In another edict,[7] the repair of ancient buildings, fallen into a ruinous state, is provided for out of the income of the public lands. It would appear that the municipalities found an increasing difficulty in meeting such expenditure. The appropriation by private persons of public spaces and edifices is dealt with in several laws of the same period.[8] The public officials became very lax or corrupt in permitting the demolition of structures which were often interesting from ancient

obscenissimam famem per totam Italiam desaevisse coactosque homines filios et parentes vendere, ut discrimen instantis mortis effugerent. Cf. *C. Th.* iii. 3, 1.

[1] *Nov. Valent.* 5, quisquis ex his quaelibet marmora aut saxa sustulerit paenae mox habeatur obnoxius. The clergy were the greatest offenders: cf. Gregorovius, *Hist. of City of Rome*, i. 226.

[2] *C. Th.* ix. 17, 5. There are seven enactments on this subject in the fourth century.

[3] *Ib.* xv. tit. 1.

[4] *Ib.* xv. 1, 2.

[5] *Ib.* l. 21.

[6] *Ib.* l. 48.

[7] *Ib.* l. 32; cf. 34, 35.

[8] *Ib.* xv. ll. 40, 41.

associations or artistic beauty. The Emperor Majorian, in his too brief reign, exerted himself to check this vandalism and greed. He denounces, with genuine indignation, the criminal negligence which had long permitted the beauty of the venerable city to be defaced in order to provide cheap materials for mean private buildings.[1] Any magistrate for the future conniving at an infringement of this law is to be punished by a fine of fifty pounds of gold, and any subordinate official similarly guilty is to be flogged and have both his hands cut off. Here and there we get a glimpse of the ruin which the confusion of the time brought suddenly on a once prosperous class. In the reign of Valentinian III., among the crowds who were driven from their homes in Africa by the Vandal invasion, there were many men of rank and education who found their way to Italy, and some of them applied in their distress for leave to practise as advocates in the Italian courts. The Emperor granted their request in a rescript repealing the constitution of 442, which limited the number of those who were allowed to plead before the provincial magistrates.[2] The later pages of the Code will often suggest similar pictures of many an obscure tragedy to the imagination of the sympathetic student. Famine and invasion took their usual tale of victims. But their worst ravages are usually soon obliterated or repaired by the kindly forces of Nature. The overwhelming tragedy of that age was the result not of violent and sudden calamities; it was prepared by the slow, merciless action of social and economic laws, and deepened by the perverse energy of government, and the cupidity and cruelty of the rich and highly-placed. In the following chapter we shall try to realise its magnitude and to discover its causes.

[1] *Nov. Maj.* 6, antiquarum aedium dissipatur speciosa constructio et ut parvum aliquid reparetur magna diruuntur. [2] *Nov. Th.* 50; cf. 34.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DECAY OF THE MIDDLE CLASS AND THE AGGRANDISEMENT OF THE ARISTOCRACY

THE evidence adduced in the previous chapter as to the disorganisation of important branches of the public service, and the spread of poverty and lawlessness, is sufficiently ominous. Such disorders strike the eye at once and impress the imagination. Yet grave as they are, they are not so serious as other and less patent maladies, which had been long eating out the strength of Roman society. In this chapter we shall try to discover the more deep-seated causes which, far more than the violent intrusion of the German invaders, produced the collapse of society which is known as the fall of the Empire of the West. A careful study of the Code will correct many a popular and antiquated misconception of that great event. It will reveal the fact that, long before the invasions of the reign of Honorius, the fabric of Roman society and administration was honeycombed by moral and economic vices, which made the belief in the eternity of Rome a vain delusion. The municipal system, once the great glory of Roman organising power, had in the fourth century fallen almost into ruin. The governing class of the municipalities, called *curiales*, on whom the burdens of the Empire had been accumulated, were diminishing in number, and in the ability to bear an ever-increasing load of obligations. At the same

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time, the upper class were increasing in wealth and power, partly from natural economic causes, partly from a determined effort to evade their proper share of the imperial imposts, and to absorb and reduce to dependence their unfortunate neighbours. In this selfish policy they were aided by the tyranny and venality of the officials of the treasury, whose exactions, chicanery, and corrupt favouritism seem to have become more shameless and cruel in proportion to the weakness of their victims and the difficulties of the times. And while the aristocratic class were becoming more selfish, and the civil service more oppressive and corrupt, the central government was growing feebler. It saw the evils which were imperilling the stability of society, and making provincial administration a synonym for organised brigandage. Its enactments abound with full and accurate descriptions of these disorders, and fierce threats of punishment against the criminals. But the endless repetition of commands, which were constantly disobeyed, was the surest sign of impotence. The decay of the middle class, the aggrandisement of the aristocracy, and the defiant tyranny and venality of the tax-gatherer—these are the ominous facts to which almost every page of the later Code bears witness.

Any one who wishes to understand the meaning of the great social catastrophe of the fifth century must fix his attention on the condition and distribution of landed property, and on the classes who possessed it. The fruits of agricultural industry were at all times the great source of Roman wealth; they were pre-eminently so in the period with which we are concerned. It is curious to notice how small a part of the Theodosian Code is devoted to the subject of trade and commerce, unless we comprehend under that head the laws relating to the many hereditary guilds which, under the surveillance of the State, were engaged in the production and distribu-

tion of commodities.[1] There is indeed a section dealing with the special tax on traders (collatio lustralis). But the commercial class (negotiatores) were, in the fifth century, probably on a much lower social level than the humblest landed proprietor. The senatorial order were forbidden to engage in trade.[2] The curiales, who formed the governing body of the municipalities, although some of their members may have been traders also,[3] were essentially a class of landed proprietors, whose position in the eye of the State was fixed by their acreage.[4] If fortunes were accumulated in commerce, they have left few traces in the pages of the Code. Sidonius, in the second half of the fifth century, gives an account of the trading venture of a merchant at Narbonne. The man has, on the credit of his good character, borrowed a little money from his friends without other security, and is going to invest it in purchasing some of the cargo of a vessel which has come into port. It appears from the description that the pursuit was not very profitable nor respected.[5] In one of the later edicts we find merchants retiring from the greater centres of commerce to remote places, with the object of escaping the special tax on their calling. It follows either that the impost was very heavy, or else that the profits of trade were very small. It has often been pointed out that the wars and social confusion of the latter part of the third century gave a shock to commerce from which it never recovered.[6] In

[1] *C. Th.* xiv. tit. 1, 6. Bk. xiii. tit. i. deals with the special tax (lustralis collatio) imposed on traders; *v.* a good summary in Marquardt, *Röm. Staatsverwaltung*, ii. 230.

[2] Cf. *C. Th.* t. 5, p. 11, Ritter's ed., and xiii. 1, 21.

[3] *Ib.* xiii. 1, 4; *v.* Godefroy's note.

[4] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 33, ut quicumque ultra vigintiquinque jugera privato dominio possidens, etc., Curiali consortio vindicetur.

[5] Sid, *Ep.* vi. 8, Apicum oblator pauperem vitam sola mercandi actione sustentat. Notice the contempt for this pursuit expressed in *Nov. Th.* 51, quos nisi indigna et pudenda armato nomini negotiatio aleret vix possent a famis periculo vindicari.

[6] Duruy, *Hist. Rom.* vi. 378; cf. v. p. 498 for the state of trade in the Antonine period. For the shock to commerce in the third century *v.* De Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* pp. 102, 103.

that disastrous time the vast destruction of wealth, the interruption of free circulation on the great routes, the loss of confidence, and the portentous depreciation in the currency,[1] must have operated with crushing effect on the trading class. Nor was the fifth century a period more favourable to their pursuits. The invasion of Italy by Alaric and Radagaisus, the invasion of Gaul and Spain by the Sueves and Vandals, the inroads of the Huns under Attila, the raids of Saxon pirates on the shores of the Atlantic, and the presence of the fleets of Genseric in the Mediterranean, must have made the trader's life one of great danger and anxiety, and probably curtailed the volume of commerce to an enormous extent. Law, sentiment, the course of events, were hostile to the prosperity of a great commercial class. The wealth both of the middle and of the upper orders was almost entirely in the soil and its fruits, and, in the absence of free industrial development, there was little capital outside the landed class available for the improvement of agriculture, or for the relief of the farmer who had got into difficulties.

Of the three great classes into which Roman society was divided, the plebeian class, composed of traders, free artisans, etc., who possessed no property in land, may, for our present purpose, be left out of consideration. The other two classes must, from their ownership of the land, and from their relations to one another and to the treasury, engage our sole attention. Of the tone and character of the highest order in the social hierarchy we have attempted to give some account in a previous chapter. They have left us literary materials which enable us to form a tolerably clear idea of their spirit and manner of life; but they seldom speak of their material fortunes or of the classes beneath them, and on these subjects our information must be drawn chiefly from the Code.

[1] Duruy, vi. 381; cf. Arnold, *Prov. Administration*, p. 173; Marq ii. 28.

The senatorial class in the provinces had, since the reign of Constantine, grown to enormous dimensions, partly owing to the policy of the emperors,[1] partly from the efforts of a large number to gain an entrance into the official world, by which they secured at once rank and consideration, and exemption from many onerous burdens and obligations.[2] The order had long ceased to have any connection with the exercise of senatorial functions. Hosts of its members had never even set foot in Rome.[3] The title of senator became merely a social badge, implying generally the possession of considerable landed property, or the tenure of some office or dignity, which was often purely honorary and ornamental. The more ambitious and distinguished families valued themselves quite as much on these official distinctions as on their wealth, and their sons were trained to make it a point of honour to carry on the tradition of official service, and to win, if possible, a higher place than their ancestors had held. But the great mass of the senatorial class were merely landowners on a considerable scale, subject to certain imposts peculiar to their order, but, on the other hand, enjoying certain privileges and exemptions. Of these exemptions the most important was that which relieved senators from municipal burdens,[4]

The municipality, in spite of designations which might

[1] Zosimus, ii. 38, *ἀπεγράψατο δὲ τὰς τῶν λαμπροτάτων οὐσίας, τέλος ἐπιθεὶς ᾧ τινι φόλλιν αὐτὸς ἐπέθηκεν ὄνομα.* The peculiar charges of the senator's position were: (1) the follis glebalis, a land-tax; (2) aurum oblatitium, a gift made on certain anniversaries; (3) the expenses of the games on the young senator being nominated to the praetorship; cf. Godefroy's Paratitlon, *C. Th.* vi. tit. 2.

[2] The special privileges of the senator were: (1) exemption from municipal taxes; (2) exemption from torture; (3) trial by a special court of five taken by lot, *C. Th.* ii. 2; (4) exemption from the aurum coronarium, which was an impost on the curiales; (5) exemption from the onus metati; (6) exemption from collatio ad opera publica.

[3] *C. Th.* vi. 4, 3 and 4. Constantius ordered senators to come to Rome on the occasion of their games when they received the office of praetor; *v.* Duruy, vii. 179.

[4] *C. Th.* vi. 3, 2, senatoriae functionis curiaeque sit nulla conjunctio; l. 3 is even clearer — a curialibus terris senatoria gleba discreta sit.

suggest other conclusions, was not confined to the walls of a town;[1] it included, besides the town, a wide area of rural district extending round it, often for many miles. From the end of the second century the municipal constitution, as it is described in the Digest and many inscriptions,[2] had undergone serious changes. In the century following the reign of Constantine, it had fallen into irreparable decay.[3] The centralisation of government and the multiplication of imperial functionaries had extinguished the free civic life, which was in an earlier period the greatest glory of Roman administration. The popular assemblies lost their right of electing to the municipal magistracies;[4] the local senate, or curia, was no longer composed of men who had held these offices,[5] but of the landholders who possessed more than twenty-five jugera.[6] At the same time, the curia became less concerned with the local interests of its municipality, and more and more burdened with duties to the imperial government. Their responsibilities, indeed, as the governing body of their community, were heavy enough. They had the management of its finances,[7] and full liability for its debts and deficits. They had the charge of the police, and of all roads, bridges, and public buildings. They had certain duties in connection with the corn supply and the relief of the poor. When they rose to the higher local magistracies, they had to bear heavy, and sometimes ruinous, expenses for the amusements of the populace, prescribed by opinion and custom, if not by law.[8] But far heavier and more crushing than these were their

[1] F. de Coulanges, *La Gaule Rom.* p. 228.

[2] Wallon, *L'Esclav.* iii. 179; see Marquardt, i. 464, on the Inscriptions of Malaga and Salpensa; cf. Arnold's *Rom. Provincial Administration*, pp. 225-237.

[3] Marquardt, i. 510.

[4] *Ib.* i. 468, 469.

[5] *Ib.* i. 503.

[6] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 33.

[7] F. de Coulanges, *La Gaule Rom.* 244, 251; Duruy, *Hist. Rom.* v. 379, n. 1; *C. Th.* xv. 1, 33 ("De Op. Publ.").

[8] *C. Th.*; F. de Coulanges, *La Gaule Rom.* p. 252; Fauriel, i. 372; Wallon, *L'Esclav.* iii. 181.

obligations to the State. It was the practice of the Roman government to devolve the collection, and even the apportionment of a tax, on the class who paid it.[1] When the imperial authorities issued their precept for a certain impost payable by the landholders of a district in money or in kind, the members of the local curia had not only to fix the assessment on the proprietors in proportion to their holdings, but they had, through some of their members, the even more invidious task of collecting the amount payable by each.[2] In addition to all this, and it was a portentous addition in those times, the curiales were liable personally for the whole amount, and had to make good any deficiency in the collection. They had also onerous liabilities for the military commissariat, and the maintenance of the posting service on the great roads.[3] In the assessment and collection of the imperial taxes there was room for injustice, venality, and cruelty. And there can be little doubt that the curiales sometimes abused their trust, so that Salvianus[4] could ask "ubi non quot fuerint Curiales tot tyranni sunt?" But fraudulent gains can have done little to alleviate the weight of a charge which, as time went on, became more and more crushing. Moreover, the curial class which had to bear it was chiefly hereditary,[5] as every other class and calling, from the highest to the lowest,[6] tended to become. Men with the required minimum of landed property were,

[1] *C. Th.* xi. 7, 12; cf. Godefroy's Paratitlon to xi. 1 ("De Annona et Tributis"); cf. xiii. 1, 17.

[2] *Ib.* xii. 1, 117. The principales are threatened with torture for embezzlement, fraudulent assessments, and excessive exactions; cf. l. 54. The curia chose collectors of revenue from among its members, and was collectively liable for their fraud or negligence. Cf. xii. 6, 9; Fauriel, i. 362.

[3] *C. Th.* viii. 5, 26, 64.

[4] *De Gub. Dei*, v. 18.

[5] The class as a whole is described often in *C. Th.* xii. 1 as originalis, ex genere Curiali, familia Curiali orti, sanguine C. obstricti, etc. Cf. Godefroy's Paratitlon to xii. 1, t. 4, p. 353.

[6] *C. Th.* x. 20, 15, where even female descent binds the children to a corporation. The Burgarii, or guards of the frontier forts, were practically public slaves, like the muleteers, etc., of the cursus publicus. Cf. vii. 14, 1; vii. 15, 1, with Godefroy's notes; Wallon, *L'Esclav.* iii. 176.

from time to time, compelled to enter it.[1] But the plebeian class, composed of the various corporations of free labourers, artisans, and petty traders, fenced in and hampered in all directions by imperial legislation, could not furnish many recruits to fill the gaps in the curia. The later legislation seems to actually discourage the merchant from investing his gains in land,[2] and so becoming a member of the municipal corporation. We have seen reason to believe that trade in the fourth and fifth centuries was not prosperous, and the ruinous condition of municipal finance might well deter any one who had been exceptionally fortunate in commerce from making an investment which entailed such personal risk and such incalculable obligations.

The emperors were fully aware of the importance of a class on which had been laid such a weight of responsibility. No fewer than 192 enactments in the Theodosian Code, together with some of the Novellae, deal with the position and duties of the curiales. The curiales are described by Majorian as the "nervi reipublicae ac viscera civitatum,"[3] although successive emperors from Constantine to Majorian had to lament that these "sinews of the commonwealth" were daily growing weaker.[4] Conventional language or policy indeed kept up the fiction that the position of the curialis was an enviable and dignified one. The municipal body is described in terms which were originally applied to the Senate of the capital,[5] and which may have had a certain justification in the days of free municipal life, when a seat in the local Senate was reserved for citizens who had filled the higher magistracies by the choice of the burghers. When

[1] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 33; cf. l. 53.

[2] *Ib.* xii. 1, 72. According to Godefroy's commentary the merchant investing in land became doubly liable, as *negotiator* and as *curialis*.

[3] *Nov. Maj.* 1.

[4] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 13, quoniam Curias desolari cognovimus. This is a law of Constantine, dated 326.

[5] *Nov. Maj.* 1, quorum coetum recte appellavit antiquitas minorem Senatum.

the curiales were deserting their functions, abandoning their ruined estates, and trying to hide themselves among serfs, they were loftily reminded by the imperial legislator of the stain which they were attaching to their splendid origin.[1] Doubtless the estimate of social rank is relative, and depends greatly on associations, imagination, and the extent of a man's horizon. At one time the member of the curia in a flourishing municipality may have found his ambition satisfied by local distinctions, and thought he had attained an enviable place when he rose to be flamen of his native town,[2] or provided games for his fellow-citizens as aedile or duumvir.[3] But the growth of the imperial despotism since Diocletian altered the whole character of municipal life. It was a very different thing to be a decurio in the second century and in the fourth or the fifth. From Constantine to Honorius the emperors were vainly struggling to stop a movement which had begun long before Constantine, and which threatened the curial body with utter depletion. The "flight of the curiales" was quite as menacing a danger of the later Empire as the inroads of the barbarians. The curiales fled in all directions, and sought a refuge from their perils and ruinous obligations in every calling. Some of the more wealthy and ambitious managed to get themselves enrolled on the lists of the Senate by diplomas (*codicilli*) surreptitiously or corruptly obtained.[4] Numbers procured admission to some office in the vast Palatine service.[5] Others enlisted in the army,[6] or took Holy Orders. Many

[1] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 6. It is a curious commentary on these fine phrases to find in *C. Th.* ix. 35, 2, that curiales, not of the highest order, could be punished by *plumbatarum ictus*, i.e. blows of a whip loaded with lead. These punishments were forbidden by Theodosius, xii. 1, 80.

[2] *Ib.* xii. 1, 77.

[3] *Ib.* xii. 1, 169.

[4] *Ib.* xii. 1, 180, 183, neminem obnoxium Curiae ad incongruam sibi fortunam deincops aspirare, elicitis codicillis clarissimatus, Magnitudo tua permittat.

[5] *Ib.* xii. i. 22, cum Decuriones ad diversas militias confugiant; cf. ll. 31, 38, 11, 13, 147; cf. Arnold's *Prov. Administration*, p. 74.

[6] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 50, and many others.

of the humbler sort were willing to exchange their position for the practical servitude of corporations,[1] such as the corn-importers or the armourers. Many more, in sheer despair, took refuge on some great estate in a dependence almost amounting to serfdom,[2] and sank even to the degradation of marriage with a woman of the servile class.

The motives which prompted men to forsake their municipality were very various, and undoubtedly ambition to rise in the world was one frequent cause of the desertion. Although the position of "decurio" is described by the emperors as one of "dignity" and "splendour," it was vastly inferior to that of the senatorial class. The difference between the two orders was much wider than that between a member of Parliament and a member of a provincial town-council in our days. The senatorial class had not only the prestige of wealth; the greater families had also a practical monopoly of the highest prefectures and offices of state.[3] They were often the descendants of men who had held such offices from time immemorial. They became almost as a matter of course governors, Pretorian prefects, and consuls. Their sons were trained to follow them in the same "career of honours," and had often completed their term of public life and governed provinces larger than most modern European kingdoms at an age when a man of ambition in our days is only getting his foot on the ladder.[4] The years of later life were passed in dignified tranquillity, and the enjoyment of that cultivated society, so stately and so exclusive, but so charming, which has

[1] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 149 (navicularii), 62 (collegium fabrorum).

[2] *Nov. Maj.* i.

[3] Sidon. *Ep.* v. 9.

[4] Sextus Petr. Probus, born *circ.* 334, became proconsul of Africa in 356, and Pretorian prefect of Italy, Africa and Illyricum in 368 (*aet.* 34); *v.* Seeck's *Sym.* cii. Symmachus, born *circ.* 340, held his first office in 365 (Seeck, xliv.). Olybrius and Probinus were consuls when mere youths. Cf. Hieron. *Ep.* 130, 3; Claud. in *Cons. Olybr. et Prob.* 63. Sidonius was prefect of Rome in his thirty-eighth year. (Mommsen, Praef. in *Sidon.* xlviii.)

been described in another chapter. It is little wonder that the ambitious bourgeois of the curial class should have struggled at any cost, by intrigue or by bribery, to raise himself and his children even to the outskirts of such a rank, from the rather sordid and limited ambitions and the wearing anxieties of his original position. If he remained in it, his highest hope could only be to reach the duumvirate, and pass into the select class of the principales,[1] after completing the whole round of duties and charges incumbent on his order. But before attaining that not very lofty eminence, he might find his patrimony eaten away by the claims of his own community, and the inexorable and insatiable demands of the imperial treasury. The numerous constitutions dealing with the migration of curiales into the senatorial class are the clearest proof, at once of the force of the tendency, and of the difficulty of restraining it. In the earlier part of the fourth century, the emperors appear not to have opposed insuperable obstacles to such ambition, provided the finances of the municipality concerned did not suffer.[2] But in the beginning of the fifth century, the rapid depletion of the curiae and the complaints which reached him caused the Emperor to assume a sterner tone. The curiales were bluntly warned not to aspire to senatorial rank.[3] The grant of *codicilli clarissimatus*, often obtained, as we have seen, by

[1] The principales (also optimates, Sym. *Ep.* x. 41; summi municipum proceres, Auson. *Mosell.* 402) were in some places ten in number, elected by the curia, after a regular ascent through all the duties and honours of their order, and bound to remain in the performance of their functions for fifteen years, *C. Th.* xii. 1, 75, 171, 189. They were exempt from cruel punishments, xii. 1, 61. Cf. F. de Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 37.

[2] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 57. A law of Valens (xii. 1, 69) allows curiales who have become senators prematurely (ante expleta munera) to retain the higher position provided they perform curial duties.

[3] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 183, neminem obnoxium Curiae ad incongruam sibi fortunam deinceps aspirare, elicitis codicillis clarissimatus, Magnitudo tua permittat; cf. l. 180. Still more trenchant is Novella 8 of Theodosius: lege itaque perpetuo valitura decernimus, nullum posthac Curialem sibimet dignitatis senatoriae infulas usurpare.

underhand means, was peremptorily prohibited; and no one, bound to municipal functions, was henceforth to be raised to senatorial rank until he had passed through all the grades of his original order, and performed all the duties which were laid upon it. Honorius, in a rescript addressed to the prefect of the Gauls in 409,[1] prohibits the principales, who formed the highest class of the curial body, from being released from their functions until they had completed a term of fifteen years in their grade. About the same time all persons of curial descent in the ranks of the army or the Palatine service[2] were ordered back to their native cities, and any one of this class is forbidden henceforth to evade his hereditary obligations by entering either the military or the civil branch of the government service. It is well to remind ourselves that, at the time when these laws were promulgated, a considerable part of Gaul had been overrun by the Germans, and we may very well believe that the duties and burdens of the governing class of the municipalities in those regions were becoming more harassing and onerous. To be sent back to the prison-house of curial slavery from some promising career at Rome, and to see every opening closed to himself and to his sons for the future, may well have driven many a man of the doomed order to despair.

In truth, the curial's position had become one of those forms of hereditary servitude by which the society of the Lower Empire was reduced almost to a system of castes. Introduced into the corporation at eighteen years of age, he could not, by any effort, legally divest himself of his inherited position until he had gone the whole round of official duty. The law did not absolutely prohibit a

[1] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 171. Dardanus, to whom it is addressed, was Pretorian prefect again in 413.

[2] *Ib.* xii. 1, 147. This law includes all curiales who had entered the army, the Palatine civil service, the bureau of the Pretorian prefect, and all other similar occupations; cf. ll. 38, 40, 44.

curial from rising to another grade in society, but it made his progress so slow and difficult that escape by legal means was possible to very few. Even when a man had surmounted all barriers, and become an imperial functionary or a senator,[1] his children, born before his elevation, were retained in their original rank, and his property remained liable for the municipal charges of his class. If a man attempted to hasten his rise, or his deliverance, by overleaping some of the stages of duty, he was sent back to the original starting-point. The most splendid dignities conferred by the Emperor himself, which would in other cases raise a man to the Senate, would not avail for those of curial origin; they are to remain in the bosom of their native place, "as it were dedicated with sacred fillets and guarding the eternal mystery, which they cannot abandon without impiety."[2] The curial's personal freedom was curtailed on every side. If he travelled abroad, that was an injury to his city; and if he absented himself for five years, his property was confiscated.[3] Even for a limited time, and for a public object, as for example to present himself before the Emperor, he could not go from home without the formal permission of the governor of the province.[4] He was forbidden absolutely to reside in the country.[5] It is almost needless to say that he had no power to dispose of his property as he pleased, since the State regarded his property as security for the full discharge of all his financial obligations. He could not sell his estate without the permission of the governor of the province.[6]

[1] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 69.

[2] *Ib.* xii. 1, 122, maneant in sinu patriae et veluti dicati infulis, mysterium perenne custodiant; sit illis piaculum inde discedere.

[3] *Ib.* xii. 1, 143, 144, ne diu in fraudem civitatum municipes evagentur, etc.

[4] *Ib.* xii. 1, 9.

[5] *Ib.* xii. 18, 1 and 2. These laws are addressed to the Egyptian prefect, and they may refer to the monks and hermits; cf. xii. 1, 63, which treats them with great contempt.

[6] *Ib.* xii. 3, 1 and 2; *Nov. Maj.* 1, nunquam sine interpositione decreti Curiales alienent.

He could not enter into any contract or business relation which might conceivably weaken the hold of the State upon his possessions. He was forbidden, for example, to accept the agency of an estate,[1] or to rent public lands, or to farm the taxes.[2] The curial who had no children could dispose only of one-fourth of his estate by will, the remainder being taken by the municipal treasury.[3] The municipality became the sole heir of an intestate curial.[4] If his natural heirs were not citizens of the place,[5] or if his daughter or widow married a stranger, they had to resign one-fourth of the property to the curia. He could not take Holy Orders without leaving his curial property in the hands of a proper substitute,[6] or absolutely abandoning it to the service of the community. We have not by any means exhausted the melancholy list of the disabilities and hardships which were heaped upon this wretched class, but enough has been said to show the causes of its depletion. Indeed, the emperors themselves, while they occasionally apply to it honorific terms, which to us now sound like grim mockery, had really no illusions as to its hopeless condition. It is often described in phrases (*nexus, mancipatio*) which seem to reduce it to a species of slavery. The curial in one law is denied the asylum of the church, along with insolvent debtors and fugitive slaves.[7] When he is recalled from some refuge to which he has escaped, his worst punishment for disobedience to the law is to be replaced in his original rank. Nor could the legislator at one time find a worse fate for certain malefactors than

[1] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 92. The curial is branded with disgrace for engaging in a servile occupation, and renders himself liable to banishment.

[2] *Ib.* xii. 1, 97; x. 3, 2, curialibus omnibus conducendorum Reipublicae praediorum ac saltuum inhibeatur facultas.

[3] See note 3 in Wallon, *L'Esclav.* iii. 186.

[4] *C. Th.* v. 2, 1, "De Bonis Decurionum."

[5] Cf. Wallon, iii. 186, n. 4.

[6] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 59, qui partes ecclesiae eligit, aut in propinquum bona propria conferendo eum pro se faciat Curialem aut facultatibus Curiae cedat quam reliquit (cf. ll. 91 and 98).

[7] *Ib.* ix. 45, 3.

to be relegated to the curia.[1] The curia had in truth become an *ergastulum*, and all the ingenuity of lawyers, all the energy of imperial officers, were occupied for generations in trying to prevent the escape of the slaves of the curia.[2] But the cruelty of their position made them reckless. Many fled to the solitude and hard fare of the hermitage.[3] Others preferred the servitude of one of the lower corporations of artisans to the service of the commune;[4] they hid themselves even among smiths and charcoal-burners. Still more placed themselves under the protection of a great proprietor,[5] and were only too glad to bury themselves among the crowd of his cottiers and serfs, where their children, by some slave mother, would at least be delivered by the ignominy of their birth from their father's hereditary curse.[6]

While the numbers of the curial class were thus steadily shrinking, in spite of the cruel determination of the legislator, the burdens on those who remained were as steadily increasing in severity. The curiales were responsible for the collection of taxes on landed property, and if the assessments in their district were not fully paid, they had to make good the deficit to the treasury. Now there is ample evidence that the tax-bearing acreage in the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth was rapidly contracting. In Campania alone, once the garden of Italy, more than 500,000 jugera had

[1] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 66 and 108. These laws of Valentinian I. and Theodosius prohibit the consignment to the curia as a punishment, but the prohibition proves the existence of the practice.

[2] *Ib.* ix. 45, 3, vigore et sollertia judicantum ad pristinam sortem velut manu injecta revocentur.

[3] *Ib.* xii. 1, 63, quidam ignaviae sectatores, desertis civitatum muneribus, captant solitudinem ac secreta, et specie religionis cum coetibus Monazonton congregantur. The law mentions Egypt and the East as the regions to which it applies (*v.* Godefroy's note, iv. p. 434).

[4] *Ib.* xii. 1, 62, 149, 162; cf. xiv. 8, 1.

[5] *Ib.* xii. 1, 76; cf. 146, multos animadvertimus, ut debita praestatione patriam defraudarent, sub umbra Potentium latitare . . . Omnes igitur quos tegunt expellant, ne Clementia Nostra ab contumacia dissimulantium in majorem indignationem exurgat; ll. 155, 162, 179, 189, occultator detur flammis ultricibus.

[6] *Nov. Maj.* 1 *ad init.*

gone out of cultivation.[1] Symmachus, who was a large landowner, complains that agriculture was becoming a very expensive luxury.[2] The later edicts frankly admit that over large areas the resources of the landed taxpayer were exhausted. And the admission is not confined to words. For in 408,[3] in 413, and again in 418, relief from the land-tax was granted to large districts in Italy, in one case to as many as seven provinces. A similar indulgence was shown to the landholders of Africa, in 410,[4] in 423, and, in consequence of the Vandal invasion, in 451. In the meantime the expense of government was probably growing. And, owing to the absence of floating capital, the government could not, as in modern times, throw part of its burdens on posterity by creating a public debt.[5] It is likely that the necessities of the public administration, as the taxable area went on shrinking, must have caused a more and more exhausting drain on the resources of those provinces which still remained solvent. Even in the absence of statistics and explicit statements on the subject, there is an overwhelming probability in favour of the theory that the demands of the imperial exchequer on the curial class were increasing in proportion to the failure of former sources of revenue.[6] We hear more and more of the

[1] *C. Th.* xi. 28, 2. The lands had been first inspected by peraequatores, and ancient documents consulted (*v.* Godefroy's note). Referred to in Sym. *Ep.* iv. 46; cf. v. 12, frustra speravi de peregrinatione solacium, cum omnium locorum maesta facies nullas aegro animo praestet indutias.

[2] Sym. *Ep.* i. 5, namque hic usus in nostram venit aetatem, ut rus, quod solebat alere, nunc alatur.

[3] *C. Th.* xi. 28, 4, 7, 12. The relief in 408 was given immediately after Stilicho's death, and was demanded by the devastations of the armies of Radagaisus and Alaric. The senatorial follis glebalis was included in the remission.

[4] *Ib.* xi. 28, 6, 13, and *Nov. Valent. 7 ad fin.* The remission in 410 "ob Africae devotionem" refers to the resistance of Africa under Heraclian to the attempts of Attalus, the Emperor set up by Alaric; cf. Zos. vi. 7.

[5] The government met cases of financial emergency by superindictions. Cf. *C. Th.* xi. tit. 16, with Godefroy's Paratitlon to xi. tit. 6; cf. Paratitlon to xi. tit. 1, and Duruy, vii. 167 n.

[6] F. de Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 51, disputes this; but cf. c. 17

land-inspectors[1] (*peraequatores*) whose function it was to deal with the ownership of waste lands, and the apportionment or remission of the land-tax. They appear to have been infected with the general venality,[2] and their peculiar duties gave them opportunities, or offered temptations, to favour the more powerful proprietors,[3] and to enrich themselves at the same time. Nor should it be forgotten, in forming an estimate of the curial's economic position, that in the fourth or fifth centuries there was a steady and serious appreciation in gold, and that taxes had to be paid in gold, as well as in kind.[4] In the reign of Valentinian I. the ratio of silver to gold was $14\frac{2}{5}$ to 1.[5] In the reign of the younger Theodosius the proportion was 18 to 1.[6] That is, in less than a quarter of a century the value of gold had risen by more than a fifth. This appreciation involved a corresponding increase of taxes payable in gold. And while the demands of the exchequer were increasing, the landowner was probably getting less and less for his agricultural products. And here we touch what was the chief economic cause of the ruin of the curiales. He was, as we have seen, liable personally for any deficit in the taxes payable by his district. The returns were almost

of the *Decline and Fall*, and Apoll. Sid. *Carm.* xiii. 19 addressed to Majorian. For an earlier time see Zos. ii. 38.

[1] On the duties of peraequatores, as defined in the Code, see Godefroy's Paratitlon to xiii. 11; cf. *C. Th.* xiii. 11, 14, 15, 16, with Godefroy's note on l. 16. These laws show at once the fairness of the government, and the opportunities for fraud open to the peraequatores.

[2] *C. Th.* xiii. 11, 10. The corrupt peraequatores are heavily fined in xiii. 11, 7.

[3] *Ib.* xiii. 11, 4, ut quid remissum gratia, quid interceptum fuerit fraude, convincant . . .

[4] *Ib.* xi. 21, 3; cf. xiii. 6, 13; Duruy, vii. 166.

[5] The calculation is based on a comparison of *C. Th.* xiii. 2, 1, with viii. 4, 27. In the former (A.D. 397) 1 libra of silver is equal to 5 solidi of gold; in the latter 1 libra of silver is equal to 4 solidi. Cf. Godefroy's notes to both laws. He sums up with the remark: adeo indies auri pretium increvit. Cf. Sym. *Rel.* xxix., paulatim auri enormitate crescente. The yield of the gold-mines seems, from the following laws, to have been diminishing: *C. Th.* x. 19, 3 (365), for the encouragement of gold-mining; x. 19, 5, 6, 7, 9 (to keep the aurileguli to their calling). Cf. Marq. ii. 43.

[6] *C. Th.* viii. 4, 27.

certainly diminishing; the government was inexorable. The mass of the curiales were themselves small landholders who were unable to compete with the owners of great estates cultivated by the labour of slaves and coloni.[1] The land was, as a rule, their only source of income. As the land became less productive, while the burdens of their position became heavier, the weaker curialis must either fly from his municipality, as so many actually did, or else he must obtain temporary relief, on whatever terms, from the only capitalist to whom he could apply, the neighbouring large proprietor. This absorption of the smaller by the greater landowners, and the growing power of the latter, is by far the most interesting and important feature in the transition of society from the despotism of the Lower Empire to the *régime* of the feudal lords.

The senatorial estate was a community by itself, supplying its own wants, and furnishing supplies for the neighbouring markets or for the government service. Part of it was cultivated directly for the lord by slaves; and the building and carpenter work, the spinning and weaving, were also carried on by slaves. Another part of the estate was cultivated by a class designated by many names, and occupying different grades of dependence.[2] Some of them were strictly serfs, *ascripti glebae*, who, on the sale of an estate, passed to the new owner. Some were in the position of metayers, paying their lord a certain proportion of the produce which they raised. In other cases they were men who had become indebted to their lord and, being unable to pay their

[1] Cf. Arnold, *Provincial Administration*, p. 161.

[2] *C. Th.* ix. 10, 3. Cf. the Paratitlon of Godefroy to v. 9, "De Fugitivis Colonis"; Wallon, *L'Esclav.* iii. p. 252; De Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* pp. 93, 139. To discuss the vexed question of the origin and nature of the status of the coloni is no part of the purpose of this chapter. For a review of some of the different theories see Wallon, *L'Esclav.* iii., chap. on "Travail de Campagne." Cf. Arnold, *Provincial Administration*, pp. 161, 162.

debt, had given up their land, remaining on it to cultivate it on certain terms.[1] Sometimes they were broken men, who had deserted their farms from various causes, poverty, oppression of government officials or powerful neighbours, or the wish to escape the heavy burdens imposed on the curial class,[2] and who put themselves under the protection of some great proprietor. There is no social phenomenon of the time which deserves closer attention, for many reasons, than the position of these free settlers on the great estates. It is an indication at once of the ruin of the middle class, and of the growing power of the aristocracy. For nearly a hundred years the Code gives evidence of the determination of the emperors to check the tendency towards this form of patronage.[3] Those who sheltered the fugitive curialis are threatened with punishments of increasing severity, fines, confiscation, infamy, till the law of Honorius in 415[4] orders the agent or bailiff who connives at the offence to be given to the "avenging flames." But all the vigour of the government could not make head against an irresistible tendency of the times. In the reign of Valentinian III. and in the reign of Majorian, the authorities have to combat the evil once more.[5] The

[1] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, v. 39-44. He distinguishes two classes: (1) defensoribus suis omnem fere substantiam suam prius quam defendantur addicunt; (2) cum agellos suos perdunt . . . aut deserunt, fundos majorum expetunt et coloni divitum fiunt . . . jugo se inquilinae abjectionis addicunt.

[2] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 76, 146; *Nov. Maj.* 1. On the origin of this form of patronage *v.* Wallon, iii. p. 271.

[3] *C. Th.* xi. 24, "De Patrociniis Vicorum." The subject is included in this book xi. which deals with taxation, because patronage was exercised to defeat the claims of the treasury; cf. xiii. 1, 21, which shows that negotiatores used this influence to evade the lustralis collatio. By xi. 24, 2, the patronus is fined 25 pounds of gold for each case. In 399 the fine is raised to 40. In l. 5 the offender's whole property is confiscated. On the evasion of tribute in Gaul by potentes, *v.* xi. 1, 26.

[4] *Ib.* xii. 1, 179.

[5] *Nov. Valent.* 9, advenae plerumque tenues abjectaeque fortunae quorundam se obsequiis jungunt. *Nov. Maj.* 1 *ad init.*, illud quoque sibi dedecoris addentes, ut dum uti volunt patrociniis potentum colonarum se ancillarumque conjunctione polluerint. Farther on the Emperor says: vendunt defugas Curiales et obnoxios corporatos cum eos occulta depredatione concusserint.

edicts of these emperors describe the condition of such dependants in a manner which singularly harmonises with the contemporary picture given by Salvianus. The injustice of governors and the venality of tax-gatherers have driven many to quit their native cities, and, "forgetful of the splendour of their birth" (it is thus the perilous rank of the curialis is described), to place themselves under the protection of some powerful patron. We need not believe, as Salvianus does, that the rich proprietor deliberately set himself to reduce his clients to serfdom; but it is only too probable that such protégés would inevitably sink to the position of coloni.

It was, however, through direct indebtedness to the great proprietors that the smaller generally lost their independence. As we have seen, there was little capital in that age derived from any other source than land. If a farmer got into difficulties from bad seasons, or under the pressure of taxation and municipal burdens, his readiest resource was to borrow from some rich neighbour.[1] There were many ways by which the great man could lay his hands on his debtor's land, and the Code leaves no doubt that the most unblushing oppression and chicanery were often employed to dispossess him.[2] The accumulation of arrears of interest led to forced sales or donations to escape from an intolerable burden. If a small estate were put up for sale, the great man had few competitors, for there was little capital seeking such investment, and the government actually seemed to discourage a merchant from purchasing land by holding him

[1] See an example in Sid. *Ep.* iv. 24. The needy debtor is paying interest at a rate which will double the capital lent in ten years; cf. Chaix, *Sidon.* ii. 236. Permission to senators to lend at 6 per cent is given in *C. Th.* ii. 33, 4 (*v.* Godefroy). *C. Th.* ii. 33, 3 allowed senators who were minors to lend money at interest.

[2] *C. Th.* iii. 1, 8 prohibits secret sales by fugitive curiales: venditiones, donationes, transactiones quae per potentiam extortae sunt, praecipimus infirmari; cf. ii. 9, 4, pacta quidem per vim et instum apud omnes satis constat cassata viribus, respuenda.

liable not only for the land-tax, but for the lustralis collatio, for which, as a trader, he was liable before the purchase.[1] The terms of one law of Honorius make it probable that mere terrorism exercised by great nobles or officials, without any legal rights whatever, often compelled the small farmer to part with his land by pretended sale or gift.[2] The secret sale of property by curiales flying from their municipality was also a growing practice. In spite of all the obstacles which the law interposed to prevent the alienation of such estates, there is clear evidence[3] that, from the time of Alaric's invasion, many sales had taken place without the formalities prescribed when a curialis parted with his estate. The law of Valentinian III., which deals with such cases, shows a tenderness and consideration for the difficulties of an unfortunate class, very unlike the spirit of earlier legislation on the subject. It maintains the validity of all such sales,[4] when effected under the pressure of extreme necessity. But a heavy condemnation is passed on men of official rank who have abused their power by violence,[5] or by refusing payment of the purchase money, to inflict injustice on a needy vendor. The culprit is compelled not only to pay the full price, but to reinstate the unwilling vendor in possession. It is clear that the class of small proprietors had little chance of holding their own in such a time as these laws describe to us. The Code frankly admits the overwhelming nature of the burdens which the State imposed on them. Every year they sank deeper into debt, and every year they were less and less

[1] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 72; cf. xiii. 1, 4.

[2] *Ib.* iii. 1, 8.

[3] *Nov. Valent.* 10, notum est post fatalem hostium ruinam qua Italia laboravit, etc.

[4] *Ib.* 10, iniquum est, tam justis praecedentibus causis, confectae venditioni ob hoc solum, quia decreti interpositio defuit, adimi firmitatem.

[5] *Ib.* 10, quod si emptor officio et administratione perfunctus, etc., venditori solidorum numerum inferat qui tabulis continetur, possessionem nihilominus perditurus, ut ad dominum redeat cui taliter probatur ablata.

able to meet their liabilities.[1] They could borrow only from the very men who were hungering for their land, and who desired their extinction. The means of compassing their ruin lay ready to the hand of a great proprietor, who, if not in office himself, was connected by social freemasonry with the official class, who could prejudice the judge on the bench, or bribe the meaner officers of the law.

It seems clear, then, that the smaller landed proprietors were, from the various causes which we have described, becoming steadily poorer and less numerous. But while this change, fraught with momentous consequences to Roman society, was in progress, another, in the opposite direction, is equally observable. The upper or senatorial class was growing not only in wealth, but in power. Its affluence can be easily estimated from the letters of Symmachus, from the declamation of Salvianus, and from the picture of Gallic society which Apollinaris Sidonius has left us. Its growing power is written on many a page of the Code. In spite of the vast and complicated machinery which had been elaborated by successive emperors for the administration of the provinces, the task of governing them with purity, economy, and fairness to all classes became more and more difficult. The greatest vigilance and energy were exerted by the central authority to secure the independence of the provincial governors,[2] and to repress the tendency to corruption and oppression among the collectors of taxes and the inferior officers of the law.[3] But the very number of edicts

[1] *Nov. Valent.* 10. usuris in majorem cumulum crescentibus.

[2] *C. Th.* i. 8, 1. Honorati are forbidden to sit with judges on the bench; cf. the whole of tit. 7, "De Officio Rectoris Provinciae."

[3] *Ib.* ix. 26 and 27, esp. 27, 2, hi qui in Republica versati sinisterius sunt, perpetuo sibi omnes dignitates, vel legitimas vel honorarias, sciant esse praeclusas. Cf. i. 7, 1, cessent jam rapaces officialium manus, cessent, inquam; nam si moniti non cessaverint praecidentur. Note that this is a law of Constantine, A.D. 331. The guilty official was degraded to plebeian rank, became *intestabilis*, required to restore fourfold the amount of his illicit gains (which could be recovered from his

directed to these ends discloses the impotence of the emperor. Heavy fines, banishment, torture, death, are all ineffectual to check the inevitable corruption of a bureaucratic government, operating over an area probably the widest which has ever been ruled directly from a single centre. The distance of the seat of government was undoubtedly the greatest difficulty, and it was a difficulty fully recognised by the imperial legislator. With all the facilities of the Roman posting service, it was in many cases only after a long interval that the complaints of the aggrieved provincials could reach the government. The sense of remoteness must have inspired corrupt and unprincipled officials with an audacity which they would not have shown if their conduct had been liable to more instant exposure. But beyond a doubt, the most serious obstacle in the way of pure and honest administration was the power of the provincial aristocracy. In the middle of the fourth century the patronage which enabled the smaller proprietors to evade their share of the taxes was severely dealt with by Valens.[1] At the close of the century the threat of still heavier penalties reveals the fact that the mischief is still rampant.[2] The patronage was probably paid for in a fashion which still further increased the influence of the patron. The upper class or *potentes*, as they are called, not only engaged in trade themselves,[3] but secured the exemption of the regular trader from the tax imposed upon his calling. Creditors with usurious or fraudulent claims[4] induced great lords to give their names to the suit,[5] with the object, no doubt often attained, of over-awing or influ-

heirs), and prohibited from holding the same office for a second term. (See ix. 27, 1, 3, 4, and ix, 26, 2, with Godefroy's note.)

[1] *C. Th.* xi. 24, 2, abstineant patrociniis agricolae, etc. Cf. Amm. Marc. xxxi. 14 for the character of Valens as an administrator.

[2] *C. Th.* xi. 24, 5, excellentia tua . . . severiorem poenam nos addidisse cognoscat.

[3] *Ib.* xiii. 1, 21; cf. xiii. 1, 5, which discouraged trading among potentes.

[4] *Ib.* ii. 13, 1; cf. xiii. 1, 15.

[5] *Ib.* xi. 1, 21.

encing the judge. It is needless to say that the rich were equally energetic in their own interests. We learn, both from Salvianus[1] and from the Code,[2] that the wealthier class in Gaul contrived to shift their share of the land-tax on their poorer neighbours. And in a law of the very next year we find that the practice of delaying payment of taxes[3] had become so general that Honorius was compelled to impose a fine of fourfold the amount on the *morator*. But, without any open defiance of the government, the upper class had many means of cheating the treasury. If, for example, an inspector came down to revise the land assessment,[4] and to settle the liability for waste lands, it was not difficult for a great proprietor to see that the settlement was in his favour. If he did not himself appear upon the scene, his agent could refuse information about the rating, or otherwise impede the inquiry. And unfortunately the inspectors, like so many of the officials of this period, were easily accessible to bribes or other forms of corrupt influence. The *procuratores* of the great estates, who, as a class, were very corrupt and unprincipled, doubtless did many things of which their masters might have disapproved. They were generally men of low or even servile origin,[5] wielding almost uncontrolled power in the absence of the proprietor. The government repeatedly shows its distrust of them.[6] In the time of the invasions they gave shelter

[1] *De Gub. Dei*, v. 28, illud indignius ac poenalius, quod omnium onus non omnes sustinent, immo quod pauperculos homines tributa divitum premunt, et infirmiores ferunt sarcinas fortiorum.

[2] *C. Th.* xi. 1, 26, nullum gratia relevet; nullum iniquae partitionis vexet incommodum sed pari omnes sorte teneantur.

[3] *Ib.* xi. 1, 27.

[4] *Ib.* xiii. 11, 2, si Peraequatore misso, aliquis aut Procuratorem suum retraxerit, aut colonum ad contumaciam retractationis armaverit, etc. Cf. l. 7 on the corruption of peraequatores.

[5] *Ib.* xii. 1, 92. In prohibiting a curialis to become procurator, the Emperor uses these words: ille vero qui immemor libertatis et generis infamissimam suscipiens vilitatem, existimationem suam servili obscuandatione damnaverit, deportationis incommodo subjugetur.

[6] E.g. *ib.* i. 7, 7, moderatores Provinciae curam gerere jubemus ne quid Potentium Procuratores perperam illicitove committant.

to fugitives with the object of retaining them as slaves.[1] They were in league with brigands,[2] and harboured them on the estates of which they had the management. So lawless had they become that the procurators in several provinces were specially forbidden the use of horses,[3] and they were coupled in the prohibition with those wild herdsmen of Samnium and Apulia who so easily passed into the ranks of professional robbers. They are also associated in several edicts with the crime of concealing deserters from the army.[4] In fact the agent of a remote estate must have often involved his master in the meshes of the law. The procurator seems to have sometimes gone so far as to hypothecate an estate without his master's knowledge,[5] and more than one law deals with this practice, in order to protect at once the owner and the *bona fide* mortgagee. The procurator who engaged in such transactions was a man who was probably accumulating a fortune of his own, and this *peculium*,[6] subject to any prior claim of the master, was made liable for the repayment of unauthorised loans. It may be readily believed that such a class as this, often under no control or supervision, would exercise their power more unscrupulously and oppressively than even the most tyrannical aristocrat. The most serious danger, however, to the small landowner from the great lords lay in the facilities which the latter possessed for corrupting the sources of justice. The governor, who had to hear a case between a wealthy man and a poor man, belonged to the senatorial class, in many cases was a member of the aristocracy of the province in which the case arose.[7] The litigant of

[1] *C. Th.* v. 5. 2. The actores and procuratores who disobeyed this law were to be sent to the mines.

[2] *Ib.* ix. 29, 2, si vero Actor sive Procurator latronem domino ignorante occultaverit . . . flammis ultricibus concremetur.

[3] *Ib.* ix. 30, 2.

[4] *Ib.* vii. 18, 5 and 12. The offending procurator is to be capitally punished.

[5] *Ib.* ii. 30, 2, "De Pignoribus."

[6] *Ib.* ii. 32, 1.

[7] *E.g.* Dardanus, Prætorian prefect of Gaul, 409, 413, the grandfather of Apoll. Sidonius (*Ep.* iii. 12).

his own rank could easily bring private pressure to bear on him to influence his decisions. Even an upright man like Symmachus had no scruple in writing to his official friends about cases which were to come before them.[1] It is to the credit of the emperors that they took the severest measures to secure judicial purity. The regulation against governors having a second term of office in the same province [2] was intended to check the growth of connections and influences which might prove too strong for the virtue even of a well-meaning ruler. The danger is still more clearly recognised in the rules which forbade the admission of any one, rich or poor, to an interview with a governor after his court had closed at midday,[3] and which enjoined him in his progresses to refuse invitations to "the luxurious quarters" which his wealthy friends were ready to place at his disposal.[4] Very explicitly, in the year 408, Honorius forbids Honorati to sit on the bench with a judge.[5] All causes are to be heard in open court with the fullest publicity.[6]

A volume might be written on the subject of financial corruption in the last century of the Western Empire. When one wanders through the maze of enactments dealing with fiscal oppression, malversation, and evasion, one knows not whether more to pity the weakness of the government, or to wonder at the hardened cupidity and audacity of the classes which were leagued together in plundering both the treasury and the taxpayer. In the early part of the fifth century, the province of Africa, so essential to the very existence of the capital, yet held by so precarious a tenure, appealed by deputation to the

Tonantius Ferreolus, etc. These are not mentioned, however, as instances of corrupt administration.

[1] Sym. *Ep.* iv. 68; ii. 41; ii. 87.

[2] *C. Th.* ix. 26, 4, si quis Proconsularem aut Vicariam potestatem, etc., iterare temptaverit, fisco ejus omne patrimonium sociari decernimus.

[3] *Ib.* i. 7, 6.

[4] *Ib.* i. 7, 4, non deverticula deliciosa sectetur. Any diversorium lent to a judex in the face of this law is to be confiscated.

[5] *Ib.* i. 8, 1.

[6] *Ib.* i. 7, 2.

Emperor for relief from its miseries.[1] The complaints relate almost entirely to oppression and injustice in the collection of the various branches of the revenue. The upper classes secured immunity from their proper burdens, or succeeded by unfair assessment in shifting them on to the class less able to bear them. The soldiers and officials grossly abused the right of free quarters in moving through the province.[2] The various grades of public servants whose business it was to collect the revenue,[3] or to press for payment,[4] or to keep the revenue accounts,[5] were all guilty of the grossest fraud, in collusion with each other, or of outrageous terrorism and violence. Alike in Africa and Gaul, the great landowners at this time, taking advantage of the evident weakness and difficulties of the government, either evaded or delayed their payments.[6] In many cases their agents, living in remote independence,[7] offered a stolid resistance to the demands of the treasury, and that at a time when the utmost despatch was needed to prepare for the storm which was ready to burst both upon Gaul and Italy, and when the government had on its hands a troublesome war in Africa. Not content with this, they shielded by their patronage weaker men who had perhaps more excuse for falling into arrears.[8] When corn was urgently needed to save the city from famine, or to provision the troops for Gaul, they allowed vessels bound to the trans-

[1] *C. Th.* xii. 1, 166; xii. 6, 27; vii. 4, 33.

[2] *Ib.* vii. 8, 10. For a good summary of the sufferings of Africa at this time from corrupt officials see Godefroy's note to vi. 29, 11, the law which orders the curiosi to be expelled from the province.

[3] Susceptores, *ib.* xii. tit. 6; cf. Fauriel, i. 362.

[4] Compulsores, *C. Th.* xi. 1, 34, with Godefroy's note; cf. Amm. Marc. xxii. 6.

[5] Numerarii, actuarii, *C. Th.* viii. tit. 1. See Godefroy's Paratitlon, and cf. l. 4, vorax et fraudulentum numerariorum propositum; l. 6, numerarii qui publicas civitatum rationes versutis fraudibus lacerare didicerunt, subjaceant tortori.

[6] *Ib.* xi. 1, 25, 26, 27. These laws were issued in 398 and 399.

[7] *Sym.* v. 87, ix. 6, Actores absentium, quibus res longinqua committitur, tanquam soluti legibus vivunt.

[8] *C. Th.* xi. 24, 4, qui fraudandorum tributorum causa ad patrocinia solita fraude confugerint; cf. Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, v. 38.

port service to be entered in their names.[1] They bribed the officers of the census to make false entries of property liable to taxation, and land-inspectors to relieve them of the burden of unproductive estates.[2] If they purchased an estate from a man in difficulties they would often, by a surreptitious contract,[3] shift the burden of the capitation-tax, payable on the coloni of the estate, to the shoulders of the needy vendor. By influence or bribes[4] they induced the book-keepers (tabularii) to cook their accounts in favour of themselves or their clients. It is difficult to conceive a powerful and wealthy class, many of whose members must have known the responsibilities of government, and all of whom might have known the overwhelming difficulties of the time, so lost to all sense of public duty.

If such was the public morality of the senatorial class, the tone of the lower grades of treasury officials was not likely to be marked by greater probity or a higher sense of honour. It would be difficult, without writing a treatise on the subject, to give an exact idea of the various devices by which the army of treasury officials, through all its many grades, contrived to defraud either the government or the taxpayer, or both together. It would seem that persons of the lowest origin were finding their way into the ranks of the service by surreptitious means.[5] They are plainly accused of looking to plunder

[1] *C. Th.* xiii. 7, 2, multi naves suas diversorum nominibus et titulis tuentur; cf. xiii. 5, 26, 37.

[2] Deserta praedia added by the inspectors to a productive estate were exempted from the senatorial land-tax by vi. 2, 13; cf. xiii. 11, 8 and 12. The process of ἐπιβολή or adaequatio is explained in Godefroy's notes to these laws. Cf. xiii. 11, 10, and Godefroy's notes on xiii. 11, 16.

[3] *Ib.* xi. 1, 26; cf. Salv. v. c. 7; Marquardt, ii. 231.

[4] *C. Th.* xiii. 10, 1 and 8, quoniam Tabularii per collusionem potentiorum sarcinam ad inferiores transferunt . . . Tabulariis erit flamma supplicium; cf. Sym. *Ep.* ix. 10.

[5] *Ib.* vi. 27, 18, ad scholam Agentum in rebus passim plurimi velut ad quoddam asylum convolaverunt, quos vita culpabiles et origo habet ignobiles, et ex servili face prorupisse demonstrat; cf. vi. 27, 4 for rules of admission to the service.

for the means of buying themselves advancement to higher places.[1] Their character is painted in the blackest colours.[2] They are threatened with every mode and degree of penalty, heavy fines or wholesale restitution of illicit gains, degradation to plebeian rank, death by the sword, by torture, by the "avenging flames."[3] They are prohibited from seeking any renewal of their term of office,[4] in language which an honest service would have resented as an intolerable insult. Yet no expedient seems to have been of any avail to check the headlong cupidity of the time. The evil, so far as we can judge from the Code, is as rampant in the reign of Majorian[5] as in the reign of Constantine. The allurements or the protection of the great, the collusion of comrades equally bent on plunder, remoteness from the seat of empire, the dumb patience of the rustic folk who could not defend themselves, and whose natural protectors were often in league with their plunderers—all these things produced a sense of impunity which the distant sound of imperial menaces seems to have hardly disturbed for a moment.

The susceptores, who were often taken from the curial class, had many opportunities for fraud and oppression.[6] Their business was chiefly to receive the tribute paid in kind for the support of the troops and government service.[7] Sometimes they did not give receipts at once,[8] or they gave them in invalid form, without the particulars prescribed by law. Sometimes they used false weights and

[1] *C. Th.* vi. 29, 11, qui ex collecta provincialium praeda ad majores militias festinant. (It need hardly be said that *militia* is applied to Palatine service generally.)

[2] Cf. Amm. Marc. xvi. 5, § 11, rapere non accipere sciunt agentes in rebus. See the terms of opprobrium collected in Godefroy, Paratitlon to *C. Th.* viii. tit. 1.

[3] *C. Th.* ix. 27, 1; xiii. 10, 8.

[4] *Ib.* ix. 26, 2.

[5] *Nov. Maj.* 1, compulsor nihil amplius a Curiali noverit exigendum quam quod ipse a possessore susceperit . . . omnis concussionum occasio removeatur; cf. the law of Constantine in 315, *C. Th.* viii. 10, 1.

[6] *v.* Godefroy's Paratitlon to *C. Th.* xii. 6.

[7] Susceptores specierum, *C. Th.* xii. 6, 9.

[8] *Ib.* xii. 6, 27.

measures,[1] so that the unfortunate farmer had to furnish more than his proper quota. Or, again, they would lend themselves to tactics by which the validity of a receipt was disputed, and the payment levied a second time.[2] The accountants of the army stores (numerarii, actuarii) were also audacious offenders. They are plainly charged with falsifying accounts and drawing larger supplies than the corps were entitled to.[3] The actuarii seem to have been a particularly troublesome class, and are ordered away from the capital by a law of Arcadius in 398.[4] But it was at the hands of the various officials charged with the duty of enforcing payment and collecting arrears that the provincials suffered the worst cruelties. There was apparently no possible means of restraining them. Their insolence is described most vividly and punished most fiercely in some of the latest laws in the Code.[5] By demanding receipts which had been lost,[6] by over-exaction,[7] by fraudulent meddling with the lists of the census,[8] by mere terrorism and brute force, they caused such misery and discontent that the Emperor[9] had more than once, at all costs to the revenue, to order their removal from a whole province. Their exactions and super-exactions had reached such a point in 440[10] that Theodosius and Valentinian issued a rescript which gave the governors of provinces the power of punishing them without any fear of the Counts of the treasury. But the effect on the collection of the revenue, and, not least, the

[1] *C. Th.* xi. 8, 3.

[2] *Ib.* xii. 6, 26; cf. xii. 1, 185, semel securitatem de refusione munerum emissam ab alio Proconsule non liceat refricari.

[3] *Ib.* viii. 1, 15. In the reign of Constantine their frauds were so enormous that the Emperor threatens them with torture for their offences.

[4] *Ib.* viii. 1, 14.

[5] *Nov. Valent.* 7; *Maj.* 4; *Mart.* 2 (cf. Amm. Marc. xxx. c. 5).

[6] *C. Th.* xi. 26, 2.

[7] *Ib.* xi. 8, 2.

[8] *Ib.* xiii. 11, 4 and 10.

[9] *Ib.* viii. 10, 4, universa compulsorum genera ex Africanis provinciis constituimus pellenda, 412; vi. 29, 11, curiosos praecepimus removeri, 414. This also relates to Africa; cf. the removal of curiosi from Dalmatia.

[10] *Nov. Th.* 45 (1) and (2).

slur on the "illustrious" officers, whose powers were thus curtailed,[1] or whose gains were diminished, compelled the Emperor two years afterwards to rescind the former law. It is only too evident that the Emperor's zeal for honest administration met with deadening opposition in the highest as well as the lowest ranks of the service. The "defensores"[2] of cities had, as one of their most important duties, to protect the taxpayers from over-exaction. Yet one can see, from a law of 409,[3] that the protection was often not to be relied upon. The defrauded provincial is directed, in the first instance, to appeal to the defensor, the curia, and the magistrates. If they refuse to accept his appeal, he is, as a last resort, in the presence, and with the cognisance, of the public clerks and minor officials, to post up his complaint in the more public places of the municipality. There surely never was a more startling confession of impotence made by the heads of a great administrative system.

Perhaps even stronger proof of the inability of the government to control its servants is to be found in the enormities of the discussores,[4] as they are described to us in some of the later constitutions. These officials, whose business it was to discover, and call up, all arrears of tribute, were appointed on a regular system; and, in ordinary times, men were not very willing to undertake a function so invidious. For the arrears were probably

[1] *Nov. Th.* 45 (2), cum pietas nostra . . . censuerat ut illustres viri sacri ac privati aerarii Comites facultatem condemnandorum Judicum non haberent. In i. 7, 5 the provincial governors are ordered to go about and exert themselves to bring to light frauds of tax-collectors. But the counts of the largesses in 452, on the pretext that the financial service was interfered with, actually succeeded in terrorising the governors.

[2] The powers of the defensor are defined in the law of 392, *C. Th.* i. 11, 2, plebem tantum vel Decuriones ab omni improborum insolentia et temeritate tueantur. Cf. *C. Th.* xii. 6, 23; *Nov. Maj.* 5; Marquardt, i. 522; De Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 39. De Coulanges takes a different view of the defensor's office from most authorities. Cf. Godefroy's Paratitlon to *C. Th.* i. 11; Fauriel, i. 375.

[3] *C. Th.* xi. 8, 3.

[4] See Paratitlon of Godefroy to *C. Th.* xi. tit. 26, and the notes to *Nov. Valent.* 7.

quite as often due by the great proprietors as by the small. But in the last years of the Empire men seem to have thrust themselves into the office without any regular authority.[1] Their object, of course, was mere plunder, and they had endless opportunities of enriching themselves. Many proprietors were deeply in debt, not only to private creditors, but to the treasury. Estates were frequently changing hands, and, in the confusion of a time of invasion and panic, documents would be lost or purchases would be made without full knowledge of the liabilities of the vendor. The discussor, who had obtained his office by intrigue,[2] came down with a powerful retinue, obtained doubtless in the same way, demanding old receipts,[3] presenting a mass of cooked accounts, which no one could check, least of all the simple farmer. What followed, as described by the Emperor,[4] resembles the worst scenes in Turkish provincial government, outrage, torture, imprisonment, murder; and all these enormities were countenanced, and actively supported, by officers of the palace and the praetorium, with the aid of the soldiers of the neighbouring garrison.[5] Who can wonder that people exposed to such brutality, in the name of civilised government, should welcome the rude justice of the Gothic chief?[6]

Yet it would be unhistorical and unfair to hold the imperial government responsible for all these horrors. Almost every page of the Code bears witness to the indignant energy with which the Emperor and his Council strove to check the anarchy of the provincial administra-

[1] The discussores of the reign of Honorius were quite as corrupt, *C. Th.* xi. 26, 2.

[2] *Nov. Valent.* 7, discussores ad provinciam non electi, sicut comperimus, sed ambientes ire dicuntur, etc.

[3] *Ib.* 7, securitates expetunt annorum serie et vetustate consumptas, quas servare nescit simplicitas et fiducia nihil debentis.

[4] *Ib.* 7, innumerae deinde caedes, saeva custodia, suspendiorum crudelitas et universa tormenta, etc.

[5] *Ib.* 7, collega furtorum Palatinus hortatur, instat apparitio turbulenta, urget immitis executio militaris.

[6] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, v. 36, 37. c. 8.

tion. But, with a high sense of duty and the appearance of omnipotence, the central authority had lost control of the vast system. The government was growing weaker as the power of the aristocracy increased, and, as we have already seen, the power of the aristocracy was being actually exerted to hamper and defeat the imperial administration. The same paralysis is seen in each prefecture and in each province. For generations there had been many governors slow or negligent in executing the will of the Emperor. Repeated edicts and a rising scale of penalties are a sufficient proof of this. But the prefect or the governor himself, however earnest and determined, was liable to be thwarted by his subordinates or by the intrigues of the Potentes. There are few traces in the fifth century of the grosser forms of corruption or oppression among the higher officials, but there are many proofs of their failure to carry out the intentions of the Emperor. This was no doubt sometimes due to want of a high sense of duty, or of energy, or to illegitimate influence brought to bear upon them. But probably the most potent cause was the contumacy of the lower members of the service, who had their own ends to gain in maintaining abuses. It is certainly significant that in so many laws, while the governor is to be fined for disobedience, his staff are laid under far heavier penalties,[1] some of them of a kind which we should describe as savage.

The last edict which deals with the miseries inflicted by the tax-gatherer sums up, as it were, the imperial legislation on this subject for generations, and in its candid pessimism sounds the death-knell of provincial administration in the West. Its author was the last prince of high purpose and capacity who addressed him-

[1] *Nov. Maj.* 6, ut Judex qui hoc fieri statuerit 20 librarum auri illatione feriatur, apparitores vero . . . fustuario supplicio subditos, manuum quoque amissione truncandos.

self to the hopeless task of reforming a vast service which was honeycombed with corruption. The last Roman Emperor of the West from whom, as statesman or soldier, great things were expected,[1] was foiled in his efforts, both in war and statecraft. And he found his own nobles and civil servants as dangerous enemies of the state as the Vandals. Any one who wishes, at first hand, to know the secret of the disease which was undermining the strength of the imperial system in the West, should read the law of Majorian issued in 458.[2] The fortunes of the provincials are still being eaten away by extortionate and repeated exactions. The municipalities are being deserted by the citizens who have to bear their burdens, but who prefer to abandon everything rather than endure the ingenious chicanery or truculent cruelty of the officers of the treasury. While the smaller proprietors are being bled to death, the agents of the great landowner, in the security of a remote estate, placidly ignore the demands of the collector. The provincial governors seem personally not to be distrusted by the Emperor; indeed they are charged with the task of reforming the fiscal system of their districts. But even they are apt to be misled or cajoled by their subordinate officers, who possess a minute knowledge of the localities, and whose audacity is stimulated by the prospect of enormous gains and the experience of long impunity.

The picture of his times left by Majorian is infinitely sad, and yet, as we said at the beginning of this chapter, it is impossible to ignore the high sense of duty, and the almost effusive sympathy for the suffering masses, which mark the last utterances of the imperial jurisprudence. Just as paganism on the eve of its proscription by the State attained for a moment an elevation and purity higher than it ever reached in the ages of its unchallenged supremacy, so the imperial government was probably never

[1] Apoll. Sidon. *Carm.* v. 585. [2] *Nov. Maj.* tit. i.

so anxious to check abuses of administration, or so compassionate for the desolate and the suffering, as in the years when its forces were being paralysed. It is easy for the cool economist to criticise some of these measures of alleviation as more characterised by sympathy than statesmanship. It has been said that the indulgence to debtors to the imperial treasury, which was so often granted, merely threw a heavier load on those taxpayers who were still able to meet their obligations.[1] But in one of the later constitutions it is expressly stated that, if the treasury insisted in all cases on its full rights, it would ruin the taxpayer, without benefiting the State.[2] Between 395 and 423, Honorius remitted the taxes over wide districts in ten different edicts.[3] Similar measures of the most sweeping character are to be found among the enactments of later reigns.[4] But in most of these cases, it is not difficult to find a justification for the remission in the public calamities, or the cruel superexactions of the agents of the fisc. Nor did the Emperor spare the private creditor in emergencies, any more than his own exchequer. In 443, so desperate had the condition of Africa become, that the government felt it necessary to suspend for a time the right of recovery for private debts.[5]

In a number of minor measures scattered over the Code the growing spirit of humanity may be observed. The governors of provinces are called upon to exercise the utmost vigilance to check the oppression of the poor by the agents of the great, and to bring to light the mis-

[1] F. de Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 59.

[2] *Nov. Th.* 51, si a possessore super alia, quae praestat has expensas, requirat, ultimas tenuesque ejus vires compulsio talis extinguet.

[3] *C. Th.* xi. 28, 2 *sqq.*

[4] *Nov. Th.* 22. The Albinus to whom this was addressed was probably grandson of the Albinus of the *Saturnalia*. Cf. Seeck, *Sym.* clxxix. He was a son of Volusianus who corresponded with S. Augustine, and succeeded Rutilius Namatianus as prefect of the city, Rutil. Namat. i. 466. He was P.P. of Gaul in 440; P.P. of Italy, 443-448; consul, 444; patrician, 446. The Novellae seem to show him the great statesman of the time, *Nov. Valent.* 1, 2, 4, 5; *Nov. Th.* 22, 23, 35, 50.

[5] *Nov. Th.* 22.

deeds of the tax-gatherer.[1] It is their duty, along with the bishops, to visit prisons on the Lord's Day, to receive any complaints from the prisoners as to their treatment, and to see that they are sufficiently supplied with food.[2] Stringent enactments require that persons charged with crime shall be brought up for trial within a year, and that prisoners shall not be subjected to unnecessary harshness.[3] By a strict term of prescription, the law strove to restrain that noxious class who made a trade of assailing titles to property,[4] or the status of persons who had succeeded in escaping from a servile or dependent condition. The evidence of the freedman against his patron was discredited,[5] and also that of the accused person who, while confessing his own guilt, attempted to incriminate another. There are three or four other measures to which we may refer, as illustrative at once of the misery of the times, and the humanitarian spirit of the central government. In the terror caused by the movements of the Goths at the beginning of the fifth century many persons, particularly in the province of Illyricum, had fled to districts which offered greater security. Some had been carried into captivity and been redeemed. In many cases they had come under obligations which were sometimes enforced in a hard and selfish spirit. Where the fugitive owes nothing but the gift of food and clothing from his host, the Emperor dismisses the claim for compensation.[6] But where he has been bought back from the hands of the enemy, his *redemptor*, whose motive was sometimes that of acquiring a useful serf, is ordered to be content with the repayment of the ransom, or, as an alternative, with five years' service. In those same calamitous years there was a

[1] *C. Th.* i. 7. 5, 7.
[2] *Ib.* ix. 3, 7.
[3] *Ib.* ix. 36, 1 and 2; cf. ix. 3, 1, *sqq.*
[4] *Nov. Valent.* 8; cf. Godefroy's elaborate Commentary on *C. Th.* iv. tit. 14.
[5] *C. Th.* iv. 11, 2; ix. 1, 19; ix. 6, 4.
[6] *Ib.* v. 5, 2; v. Godefroy's Com.

great famine in Italy, and it appears probable that some masters were tempted to limit the number of mouths on their estates by exposing the infants of their female slaves. The exposed child was sometimes found and treated with kindly human feeling; and the legislator interposed to prevent the cruel master from reclaiming to servitude the creature whom he had consigned to death.[1] The flight of serfs from one estate to another was evidently very common. The law of 419 fixes the limit of thirty years, after which the fugitive colonus, who had found another master, and had probably formed family ties, could not be recalled to the servitude from which he had fled.[2] In the case of a female serf, the limit is twenty years. And if, before that term, she has married, in order to prevent the break-up of a home the law enacts that her second master shall provide a *vicaria*, presumably unmarried, who shall satisfy the claim of her former lord.

These are a few examples of the efforts of government to alleviate that mass of misery and social injustice which it was impotent to cure. To a sympathetic mind, there is no more painful reading than the Theodosian Code of the fifth century. The authors of these laws are generally loaded with the double opprobrium of weakness and corruption. *Les malheureux ont toujours tort.* The system of bureaucratic despotism, elaborated finally by Diocletian and Constantine, produced a tragedy in the truest sense, such as history has seldom exhibited; in which, by an inexorable fate, the claims of fancied omnipotence ended in a humiliating paralysis of administration; in which determined effort to remedy social evils only aggravated them till they became unendurable; in which the best intentions of the central power were, generation after generation, mocked and defeated alike by irresistible laws of human nature, and by hopeless perfidy and corruption in the servants of government.

[1] *C. Th.* v. 7, 2. On the famine cf. Zos. vi. 11, Olympiod. § 4. Sozom. ix. 8.

[2] *C. Th.* v. 10.

# BOOK IV

## THE BARBARIANS AND THE FUTURE OF THE EMPIRE

# CHAPTER I

## THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE INVASIONS

No part of the inner life of the fifth century should, in the mind of an intelligent student, excite greater curiosity than the attitude of the Romans of the West to the invaders, and their ideas as to the future of Rome. As he reads the meagre chronicles of the times, he can hardly help asking himself, What did these men think about the real meaning of the sack of Rome by Alaric and by Genseric; of the devastation of the provinces; of the settlement of Visigoths, Burgundians, Sueves, and Vandals in regions which, in spite of temporary incursions, had for centuries enjoyed the Roman peace? Was the end indeed come, the end of so much effort, of so many glories, of that great history of civil and military virtue which had given uniform law and culture to the realms of Alexander as well as to the countries bordering on the inland and the western seas? Or, were the calamities of the time, crushing and calamitous as they were to individual citizens, only temporary and limited in their range, such as the Empire had often before suffered, without serious and lasting effects on the general organisation of society? And as to the causes of the calamity, were they the decline of Roman virtue and skill in statecraft, or were they the anger of the old gods of Rome for the desertion of their altars, or the punishments sent by the Christian's God for luxury and

oppression of the weak? Finally, what was to be the relation of the Empire, if it was to continue, to these strange immigrants into her territory, and how were they going to behave to the power which had so long kept them at bay?

We propose to collect, from the literary remains of the period, various answers to these questions. But before doing so, there are some general considerations as to the character of the invasions of the barbarians in the fifth century, and their settlement in the provinces, which it will be well to bear in mind in the review which we propose to make. The modern, who has only the popular conception of the events of that time, is apt to think that the Western Empire succumbed to an overpowering advance of whole tribes and peoples, animated by hatred of Rome, sweeping away the remains of an effete civilisation, and replacing it, in a sudden and cataclysmal change, by a spirit and by institutions of a perfectly different order. Yet, if such were a true account of the fall of the Roman Empire, the tone and behaviour of many of the Romans of that time would be inexplicable. Here and there there are cries of horror at the havoc and slaughter which were caused by some violent incursion. And, undoubtedly, the capture of the city gave for the moment a terrible shock to the ancient faith in the strength and stability of Rome. But this was only a transitory feeling. Confidence soon returned. The cities and regions, which are said to have been desolated and ravaged, reappear with apparently few traces of any catastrophe. The government betrays no sign of confusion or despair. Individual observers may have their doubts and questionings about the course of events, but few seem absolutely dismayed, and some display a confidence and hopefulness which would be quite astonishing, if the old popular conception of the barbarian onslaughts were the true one.

A very cursory glance at the history of the Empire reveals the secret of this *insouciance*. The invasions of the fifth century were nothing new, nor was there anything very startling in the settlement of Germans on Roman soil. From the times of Marius not a century had passed without some violent inroad of German hosts. The myriads annihilated on the field of Aquae Sextiae were but the advance guard of a mighty movement, which was always pressing on to the West or South. Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, had all to throw back successive attacks on the frontier of the Rhine. Marcus Aurelius spent eight campaigns in a struggle with a vast confederacy on the Danube.[1] In the third century almost every province, and even Italy itself, was ravaged, and the Goths,[2] a comparatively new horde, who had worked their way from Scandinavia to the Ukraine, swept the Euxine in thousands of vessels,[3] and harried the towns of Asia Minor and Greece. In the reign of Probus, the Germans captured and pillaged sixty towns in Gaul, and overran the whole province.[4] Another formidable irruption took place in the middle of the fourth century. Enormous numbers of Franks, Alemanni, and Saxons passed the Rhine. A great part of Gaul was overrun, and forty towns along the Rhine were sacked.[5] Once more the invaders were driven back with enormous loss.

The invasions of the third and fourth centuries, in respect of the numbers and impetuosity of the assailants, seem to us now to have been almost overwhelming. The Gothic host of the reign of Claudius is said to have

[1] Jul. Capitol. *vit. M. Anton.* c. 22, gentes omnes ab Illyrici limite usque in Galliam conspiraverant.

[2] Treb. Poll. *vit. Gallien.* c. 6, 13; *vit. Claud.* c. 6; Zos. i. 30, 31. Cf. Pallmann, *die Gesch. der Völkerwand.* i. pp. 49 *sqq.*; Jordan. *Get.* 17.

[3] Zos. i. 42, ναυπηγησάμενοι πλοῖα ἑξακισχίλια καὶ τούτοις ἐμβιβάσαντες δύο καὶ τριάκοντα μυριάδας: *vit. Claud.* c. 6, 8.

[4] Flav. Vop. *Prob.* c. 13, cum per omnes Gallias securi vagarentur.

[5] Zos. iii. 1, 3; Amm. Marc. xvi. 12.

numbered 320,000 men. The Germans who spread over the whole of Gaul in the reign of Probus must have been even more numerous, if that emperor slaughtered 400,000 of them, as he is said to have done.[1] Yet it does not appear that, at crises so appalling, the Romans ever despaired of the safety of the State. The letter of Probus to the Senate, to which we have referred, rather expresses an almost exuberant confidence.[2] The invaders, however numerous, are invariably driven back, and in a short time there are few traces left of their ravages. The truth seems to be that, however terrible the plundering bands might be to the unarmed population, yet in a regular battle the Germans were immensely inferior to the Roman troops. Ammianus, who had borne a part in many of these engagements, says that, in spite of the courage of the Germans, their impetuous fury was no match for the steady discipline and coolness of troops under Roman officers.[3] The result of this moral superiority, founded on a long tradition, was that the Roman soldier in the third and fourth centuries was ready to face almost any odds. In 356 an immense multitude of the Alemanni inundated Eastern Gaul.[4] Julian, the future Emperor, who was then a mere youth, with no previous training in the art of war, was in command of only 13,000 men, of whom few were veteran troops.[5] Yet in a very short time not an enemy was left in Gaul, and the victors were carrying the war far into the heart of Germany.[6] There must undoubtedly

[1] Treb. Poll. *vit. Claud.* c. 8; Flav. Vop. *vit. Prob.* c. 15. But on the credibility of Vopiscus *v.* Peter, *Gesch. Litt. über die Röm. Kaiserzeit*, i. 150; and ii. 281 on the carelessness of historians in dealing with numbers.

[2] *Vit. Prob.* c. 15, omnes penitus Galliae liberatae . . . arantur Gallicana rura barbaris bubus . . . nos eorum omnia possidemus.

[3] Amm. Marc. xvi. 12, 47, Alemanni robusti et celsiores, militea usu nimio dociles; illi feri et turbidi, hi quieti et cauti.

[4] Zos. iii. 3, πλῆθος ἄπειρον ἐπεραιώθη βαρβάρων.

[5] Amm. Marc. xvi. 12, 2; Zos. *l.c.*

[6] Zos. iii. 4, ἄχρι τῶν Ἐρκυνίων ὀρυμῶν τοὺς φεύγοντας ὁ Καῖσαρ ἐπιδιώξας.

have been much loss of life and property in some of these raids.[1] Yet a very few years after the ravages which were checked by Julian, the valley of the Moselle is described to us by Ausonius as a paradise which shows no trace of the hand of the spoiler.[2] Comfortable granges and luxurious villas look down from every height. The vineyards rise in terraces along the banks, and the yellow corn-lands can vie even with the fertility of the poet's native Aquitaine. The population are prosperous and happy. There is even an air of rustic jollity and gaiety over the scene from which all thoughts of past suffering or coming danger seem to be banished.[3]

Of the same character were the great invasions of the opening years of the fifth century. A great army under Radagaisus, which, according to the lowest estimate, numbered 200,000 men, crossed the Alps and penetrated into Etruria.[4] That the government regarded the danger as serious, may be inferred from the edict which called the slaves to arms.[5] Yet Stilicho, with a force of only 30,000 regular troops, and some Hun and Alan auxiliaries,[6] signally defeated that great host, and the prisoners taken were so many that they were sold for a single *aureus* apiece.[7] In the beginning of the year 406[8] a horde of Alans, Sueves, and Vandals crossed the Rhine, from which the garrisons had been withdrawn to meet the danger in Italy.[9] The invaders caused great consternation, and undoubtedly inflicted much damage and suffering in their passage through Gaul.[10] But the

[1] Zos. iii. 1.

[2] Auson. *Idyl.* x. v. 156. The poem on the Moselle was composed *circ.* 370; *v.* Schenkl, Proem. xv.

[3] Auson. *Idyl.* x. v. 165.

[4] Oros. vii. 37, § 13, secundum eos qui parcissime referunt, ducenta millia hominum. Cf. Zos. v. 26; Marcell. *Chron.*

[5] *C. Th.* vii. 13, 16.

[6] Zos. v. 26.

[7] Oros. vii. 37, § 16.

[8] Prosp. *Chron.*, Arcadio vi. et Probo Coss.; Oros. vii. 38 and 40.

[9] Claud. *de Bell. Get.* 421:

tutumque remotis
excubiis Rhenum solo terrore relinquunt.

[10] *Carm. de Prov. Div.* v. 25, periere tot urbes (v. 34), Vandalicis gladiis sternimur et Geticis . . . ultima pertulimus; Rutil. Namat. i. 27-30; Hieron. *Ep.* 123, § 16.

districts and cities, which they are said to have plundered and destroyed, within a generation are found to be once more flourishing and prosperous.[1]

In the fragmentary annals of the fifth century there is no sign that the generals of the Empire felt any fear of an overwhelming superiority on the side of the invaders. In 426 the city of Arles was attacked by a powerful force of Goths; but they were compelled by Aetius to retire with heavy loss.[2] Two years later, the same great general recovered the Rhineland from the Franks.[3] In 435 he inflicted a crushing defeat on the Burgundians, and compelled them to sue for peace.[4] In the following year Litorius, the lieutenant of Aetius, by a rapid movement, relieved the town of Narbonne, when it was hard pressed by famine and the Gothic army. And although Litorius soon afterwards was taken captive by the hands of the Goths, the annalist expressly says that it was the result of reckless ambition and superstitious credulity, not of any inferiority of force.[5] The invasion of Attila in 451 was probably the most appalling danger, in respect to the numbers of his motley host, which the Romans had had to face for ages.[6] Aetius had only a handful of troops under his command,[7] and although he was able to rally to his support Visigoths, Franks, Burgundians, and Saxons, yet the credit of defeating that fierce and crafty power, which had reduced all central Europe to vassalage, must be awarded to Roman daring and organisation. In the last days of the independence of Auvergne and of the Western

[1] This appears to be the case in Bordeaux, Paulin. Pell. *Euch.* 240; cf. 284. Compare the state of Rome after the sack by the Vandals, Apoll. Sid. *Ep.* i. 5.

[2] Prosp. *Chron.* Theodos. xii. and Valent. Coss.

[3] *Ib.* Felice et Dionysio Coss.

[4] *Ib.* Theod. xv. and Valent. iv. Coss.

[5] *Ib.* ad. a. 439, ut nisi inconsideranter proelians in captivitatem incidisset, dubitandum foret cui potius parti victoria ascriberetur.

[6] Apoll. Sid. *Carm.* vii. 320; cf. Prosp. *Chron.* ad a.

[7] Sid. *Carm.* vii. 329, tenue et rarum sine milite ducens Robur in auxiliis; cf. Fauriel, i. p. 226.

Empire, a mere handful of troops under the gallant Ecdicius,[1] and raised by his own resources, kept the Visigothic army for months at bay, and the Roman showed in this final struggle an almost contemptuous recklessness.

The Germans then were not superior to the Romans in military skill and courage. Nor were they animated by any common purpose or hatred of Rome. So far from having any common purpose, they were hopelessly divided among themselves, and are as often found fighting for the Empire as against it. The Franks on the Rhine were champions of Rome when they were overwhelmed by the invaders in 406.[2] Stilicho had Alan and Hun auxiliaries in his great battle with Radagaisus.[3] It was with Hun cavalry that Aetius and Litorius strove to check the advance of the Visigoths in Southern Gaul.[4] It was with the aid of Visigoths, Franks, Saxons, and Burgundians that Aetius defeated the army of Attila on the Catalaunian plains. Again and again the Visigoths of Toulouse lent their forces to support the Roman power in Spain against the Sueves.[5] The Romans of Auvergne, when they were deserted in its weakness by the imperial government, received help and encouragement in their last struggles against Euric from the Burgundians.[6] It is clear from these facts that the Empire was not an object of hatred to the barbarians. Indeed they were often eager to be taken into its service; and many of their chiefs, like Alaric or Ataulphus, had no higher ambition than to be appointed

[1] Sid. *Ep.* iii. 3, tacco deinceps collegisse te privatis viribus publici exercitus speciem, etc.; cf. Greg. Tur. *Hist. Fr.* ii. 24, multitudinem Gotthorum cum decem viris fugasse perscribitur.

[2] Oros. vii. 40, § 3, multaeque cum his aliae (gentes) Francos proterunt. Fauriel, i. 47.

[3] Zos. v. 26.

[4] Prosp. *Chron.* a. 437, 439.

[5] Idat. *Chron.*, mox Hispanias rex Gothorum Theodoricus cum ingenti exercitu, et cum voluntate et ordinatione Aviti Imperatoris ingreditur.

[6] Sid. *Ep.* iii. 4. The help however, was of doubtful value Chaix, *Sid.* ii. 164.

to high military command. On the other hand, there was a corresponding readiness on the Roman side to employ barbarian forces in war. From the earliest days of the Empire these auxiliaries appear on the army lists. Germans are found in the bodyguard of Augustus.[1] They fought under Vitellius in the foremost ranks at the battle of Cremona.[2] Vespasian had special confidence in the loyalty of the Sueves, and had two of their chiefs in his service.[3] Marcus Aurelius formed some corps of Germans for his war with their countrymen on the Danube.[4] In the third century, the tendency becomes even more marked. Valerian, in a despatch to Aurelian, describes an army which included troops from Ituraea, Arabia, and Mesopotamia, and officers bearing such unmistakable German names as Hariomundus, Hildomundus, and Haldagates.[5] Claudius II., after the great defeat which he inflicted on the Goths,[6] enrolled a large number of them under his standards. Probus recruited the frontier garrisons with 16,000 from the wreck of the great host which had devastated Gaul.[7] The army of Constantine, in the battle of the Milvian Bridge, was chiefly composed of Germans and Celts and Britons.[8] Of similar composition was the army with which Theodosius defeated Eugenius at the Frigidus.[9]

Some of these barbarian troops took service voluntarily under an express agreement, stating the conditions on which they served. Others were compelled to join the standards as the result of defeat in battle.[10] Some of them received regular pay and rations; others received

[1] Suet. *Octav.* 49.
[2] Tac. *Hist.* i. 61.
[3] *Ib.* iii. 5.
[4] Jul. Capitol. *vit. M. Anton.* c. 21, emit et Germanorum auxilia contra Germanos.
[5] Flav. Vop. *Aurel.* c. 11.
[6] Zos. i. 46, ὅσοι δὲ διεσώθησαν, ἢ τάγμασι Ῥωμαίων συνηριθμησαν κ.τ.λ. Cf. Treb. Poll. *vit. Claud.* c. 8.
[7] Flav. Vop. *Prob.* c. 14, accepit praeterea sedecim milia tyronum, quos omnes per diversas provincias sparsit, etc.
[8] Zos. ii. 15.
[9] *Ib.* iv. 56.
[10] v. *C. Th.* vii. 13, 16; Godefroy's note on the Foederati and Dedititii.

grants of land, which were held on condition of military service, and which passed to their sons on the same condition.[1] A page of the Notitia contains a list of more than twenty corps of these military colonists, under the name Sarmatae Gentiles, who were settled at various places from Bruttium to the Alps.[2] Similar German corps, under the name of Laeti, had lands assigned to them in almost every part of Gaul. The Gallo-Roman population had been long accustomed to the residence of these bands on their soil. Batavi are found at Arras; Franks at Rennes; Sueves at Coutances, Mans, Bayeux, and Auvergne; Sarmatians at Paris, Poitiers, and Amiens.[3] Occasionally the Laeti proved to be dangerous neighbours. Thus we learn from Ammianus Marcellinus that a body of Laeti, in the troubled year 357, attempted to capture the city of Lyons, and plundered the surrounding country.[4] Here we have an anticipation in the fourth century of what happened more frequently in the fifth, when Burgundians and Visigoths had obtained a permanent settlement in Gaul.

We shall see, in a subsequent chapter, that the establishment of the Germans in the south and east of Gaul disturbed and alarmed the Romans of the province far less than we should have expected. In a short time the intruders were accepted as more or less friendly neighbours. Here again the past history of the Empire will be found to have prepared men's minds for what, taken by themselves, would have seemed stupendous changes. Just as there were countless incursions for

[1] *C. Th.* vii. 20, 12, with Godefroy's note; xiii. 11, 9; Amm. Marc. xx. 8, 13; *Paneg. Constant.* c. 21; Zos. ii. 54.

[2] *Notit. Dig.* ed. Böcking, p. 121 (c. xl.). Cf. the grants of terrae limitaneae made to veterans and their sons on military tenure, Lamprid. *Alex. Sev.* c. 58, § 4; Flav. Vop. *Prob.* c. 14; *C. Th.* vii. 15, 1.

[3] *Notit. Dig.* pp. 119, 120; cf. notes, pp. 1044-1080. On the Gentiles, not to be confounded with Laeti, *v.* pp. 1080 *sqq.*; cf. Eum. *Paneg. Const.* c. 21; Amm. Marc. xvi. 11, 4; Zos. ii. 54; F. de Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 389.

[4] Amm. Marc. xvi. 11, 4.

plunder before the Sueve and Vandal irruption of 406, so there were many cases of barbarians seeking and obtaining a peaceful settlement within the frontier before the Visigoths settled on the Garonne, and the Burgundians on the Upper Rhine and the Rhone. Augustus, on receiving the submission of the Ubii and Sicambri, assigned them lands on the left bank of the Rhine.[1] Tiberius transported 40,000 Germans into the same region.[2] The Germans seem to have been seldom unwilling to enter the circle of the pax Romana. For instance the Batavians, driven from their own country by civil war, crossed the frontier and settled down as subjects of Rome, and for ages the Batavian cavalry had a brilliant reputation in the Roman army.[3] In the third century Probus is said to have Germanised the provinces.[4] He gave a settlement in Thrace to 100,000 Bastarnae, who, we are told, proved themselves loyal subjects of the Empire. A similar experiment, in the case of the Vandals and Gepidae, seems to have been less successful. A body of Franks, who had obtained from the Emperor a settlement somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, proved even less worthy of his generosity.[5] They got a fleet together, spread havoc and confusion through the whole of Greece, wrought great slaughter in an attack on Syracuse, and finally, having been repelled from the walls of Carthage, returned to their home. The Salian Franks, who had been driven from their old seats and had occupied the region between the Scheldt and the Meuse, were, after some hard fighting, recognised as Roman subjects by Julian.[6] The most striking example of the eagerness of the Germans to be received on Roman territory was the famous petition of the Goths to the

[1] Sueton. *Oct.* c. 21.
[2] Ib. *Tib.* c. 9.
[3] Tac. *Hist.* i. 59, iv. 12; *Ann.* ii. 8; Amm. Marc. xvi. 12, 45.
[4] Duruy, *Hist. Rom.* vi. p. 513; Flav. Vop. *Prob.* c. 15; Zos. i. 71.
[5] Zos. i. 71.
[6] Amm. Marc. xvii. 8, 3.

Emperor Valens in 376,[1] to be allowed to place the broad waters of the Danube between them and the terrible Huns, who were then advancing from the East.[2] Probably a million of men, women, and children were transported across the swollen river. They came not as conquerors, but as suppliants for food and shelter, under the protection of Rome. No reader of Gibbon needs to be told the tragic tale of what followed that great migration. It was a turning-point in history.

Among the Gothic chiefs who are seen in the pages of Ammianus Marcellinus making a last stand against the Huns was one named Munderich.[3] Some years afterwards this chief is found in the position of duke on the frontiers of Arabia. Munderich is only one of many of his race who rose under the Empire to high military command and office. This was a necessary result of the policy which, from the time of Gallienus, practically excluded the senatorial order from military service. We have seen German officers commanding corps under Valerian in the third century.[4] Magnentius, who rose to be Emperor on the murder of Constans, was of barbarian origin, and had once belonged to a corps of Laeti in Gaul.[5] Arbogastes, who raised Eugenius to the throne, was a Frank,[6] who, by military ability and commanding power,[7] obtained the post of master of the forces under Valentinian. Theodosius cultivated the intimacy of many of these barbarian chiefs,[8] and one of his principal lieutenants, Modares,[9] who rose to be magister militum, was of Scythian descent. Another barbarian officer, who bore a great part in the events of that period, was

[1] Amm. Marc. xxxi. 3.

[2] Zos. iv. 20; Eunap. § 42, p. 31 (Müll. *Frag. Hist.* iv.); Gibbon, c. 26.

[3] Amm. Marc. xxxi. 3, 5.

[4] Flav. Vop. *Aurel.* c. 11.

[5] Zos. ii. 42; ii. 54.

[6] *Ib.* iv. 33.

[7] *Ib.* iv. 53.

[8] *Ib.* iv. 56, ἅμα τῷ παραλαβεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν Θεοδόσιος βαρβάρους τινὰς εἰς φιλίαν καὶ ὁμαιχμίαν ἐδέξατο, καὶ ἐλπίσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ δωρεαῖς ἄλλαις τιμήσας, εἶχε δὲ καὶ ἐν θεραπείᾳ πάσῃ καὶ τοὺς ἑκάστης φυλῆς ἡγουμένους καὶ τραπέζης ἠξίου κοινῆς.

[9] Zos. iv. 25.

Richomer.[1] His career, of which we possess full details, is a good illustration of the great position which men of his nationality could attain under the later emperors. Richomer was a Frank of high birth, and first appears as count of the domestics in the reign of Gratian. He was sent into Thrace during the troubles with the Goths to support the Emperor Valens, and shortly afterwards was raised to the post of magister militum. After a period of service in the East, during which he formed a close friendship with Libanius, he was employed by Theodosius in high command in the campaign against Maximus. He had great influence in the imperial counsels, and lived on terms of intimacy with Symmachus and his circle. Another Frank chief, Bauto,[2] the father of the Empress Eudoxia, is said to have wielded an almost regal power under the younger Valentinian, and his elevation to the consulship in the same year with the Emperor Arcadius was celebrated in a panegyric by S. Augustine.[3] We have taken a few of the more striking examples of the rise of barbarians to commanding positions. Other names, such as Fravitta, Gainas, Merobaudes, Stilicho, will occur readily to any person moderately well read in the history of the Lower Empire. How many more may have disguised their nationality under Roman names no one can tell.[4] But German chiefs not only obtained the great military commands, they also rose to the consulship, the highest civil honour which the Emperor had to bestow. Dagelaephus[5] and Merobaudes[6] were colleagues of Gratian in this great office. In the reign of Theo-

[1] Amm. Marc. xxxi. 7, 4; Zos. iv. 54, 55; cf. Seeck's *Sym.* cxxxv.; Godefroy's note to *C. Th.* vii. 1, 13; Rauschen, *Jahrbücher*, pp. 18, 22, 172.

[2] Zos. iv. 33, 53; Ambros. *Ep.* i. 24. The question of his religion depends on the use of the singular participle *inserviens* in Ambros. *Ep.* i. 57, 3; cf. Seeck, *Sym.* cxli.; Rauschen, pp. 59, 65, 208.

[3] *Conf.* vi. 6.

[4] Like Julius Florus and Julius Sacrovir (the latter only partially), Tac. *Ann.* iii. 40, and Julius (or Claudius, *Hist.* iv. 13), Civilis, a Batavian, Tac. *Hist.* i. 59.

[5] Amm. Marc. xxvi. 9, 1, a. 366.

[6] a. 377. Cf. Rauschen, *Jahrbüch*, pp. 147, 271.

dosius, Merobaudes, Richomer, and Bauto were consuls in successive years, and at least five more German names appear in the reigns of the last emperors of the West. When an office, which the Emperor himself was proud to hold, was given so freely to men of barbarian origin, it is plain that the old exclusiveness had disappeared, and that the Germans had stolen their way into the very citadel of the Empire long before its distant outworks were stormed.[1]

Many of these German officers were men of brilliant talents, fascinating address, and noble bearing. To military skill they often added the charm of Roman culture and a social tact which gave them admission even to the inner circle of the Roman aristocracy. Symmachus writes to Richomer as to one of his most valued friends. He extols his many virtues, and has only one grudge against him, that he cannot help monopolising all that is best in Roman society.[2] The friendship of Bauto Symmachus regards as one of his treasures.[3] Men like these, great soldiers, and polished men of the world, must naturally have had great social influence. And, indeed, there are signs that even in smaller things, such as toilet and dress, Germans, at the beginning of the fifth century, were setting the fashion. Three edicts of Honorius, between 397 and 416, forbid the wearing of trousers, long hair, and fur coats of the barbarian style within the precincts of the city.[4] The tone of the law of 416 leaves no doubt that the rage for German fashions was widespread, and that the previous edicts had been disregarded.

In yet another capacity crowds of Germans had been introduced into Roman territory. Synesius, bishop of Cyrene, towards the close of the fourth century complains that every wealthy household is full of Gothic or Scythian

[1] Rutil. Namat. ii. 50.

[2] *Ep.* iii. 58, ad te migravit quidquid Romae optimum fuit.

[3] *Ib.* iv. 15, 16.

[4] *C. Th.* xiv. 2, 3, 4; cf. Claud. in *Ruf.* ii. 78; Rutil. Namat. ii. 49.

slaves, serving as stewards, butlers, bakers, and personal attendants of every grade. We know also that from the first century enormous numbers of Germans were planted as coloni on estates over all the provinces. Crowds of Marcomanni were so distributed throughout Italy by Marcus Aurelius.[1] The great emperors of the third century took untold numbers of prisoners,[2] and flooded the country districts with new tillers of the soil.[3] In the words of Probus, the barbarians were ploughing and sowing for Roman masters.[4] The victories of Julian, Gratian, Theodosius, and Stilicho, all gained within a period of fifty years, recruited still further the ranks of rural labour.[5]

It appears then that there was nothing new in the hostile raids or peaceful settlement of the barbarians on Roman territory in the fifth century. For more than five hundred years the Empire had been resisting the pressure of barbarism, occasionally suffering heavily for a time, but always in the end triumphant over mere force. Yet each successive victory had admitted in increasing numbers the barbarian element into the frontier posts, the armies, or the fields and households of Rome. The highest military commands had for generations been held by German soldiers of fortune, who served the State loyally even against their kinsmen. A Roman, who had in his youth seen the Alemanni driven across the Rhine, and thousands of Germans serving under the eagles in Italy, who had found in Richomer, Bauto, or Stilicho his most charming and distinguished friends, and had seen Frank masters of the cavalry sharing the honours of the consulship with the Emperor, might, even after the scenes of 410, have smiled at the suggestion that the Empire was in any serious danger from the Germans.

[1] Jul. Capitol. c. 22, accepitque in deditionem Marcomannos, plurimis in Italiam traductis.

[2] Treb. Poll. *vit. Claud.* c. 8, § 6.

[3] *Ib.* c. 9, § 4, impletae barbaris servis . . . Romanae provinciae etc.

[4] Flav. Vop. *Prob.* c. 15.

[5] Oros. vii. 37, 16.

Nor were the invasions of the first decade of the fifth century of such a uniform and sweeping character as to suggest, even to those who witnessed and suffered from them, a single overwhelming movement, animated by one spirit and advancing to one end. The numbers of the invaders do not appear to have approached the mighty hosts who were defeated by Claudius and Probus in the third century.[1] The forces of Ataulphus may have hardly exceeded 20,000 or 30,000 men.[2] The Burgundian invaders of Gaul were reckoned at 80,000.[3] The entire Vandal horde, young and old, slaves and free, only amounted to the same number.[4] The Frank warriors, under Clovis, did not number more than 6000 men.[5] Moreover, as was pointed out long ago by a great authority, the so-called invasions were events essentially partial, local, temporary.[6] We may add that there was a great variety in their purpose and character. Sometimes a band of no great numbers, bent wholly on plunder,[7] will come down on a countryside and carry off the cattle and peasants from the fields, or effect a stealthy entrance into an unguarded town.[8] Sometimes in greater masses, swelling perhaps to tens of thousands, they will sweep across a whole province, capturing cities, and plundering and burning the farms and country houses. Or, again, in the form of a regular army, claiming to be federated soldiers of the Empire, they will quarter themselves on a province, and draw from its revenues the rations and pay which were assigned to the regular soldiers of Rome. Or, once more, they come with the

[1] Treb. Poll. *Claud.* c. 6; Flav. Vop. *Prob.* c. 15, quadringenta milia hostium caesa sunt.

[2] De Coulanges, *L'Inv. Germ.* p. 437.

[3] Oros. vii. 32, § 11; Fauriel, i. 120, thinks this much exaggerated.

[4] Vict. Vitens. i., qui reperti sunt senes, juvenes, parvuli, servi vel domini, octoginta millia numerati.

[5] Cf. Fauriel, ii. 30.

[6] Guizot, *Civ. en France*, i. 237.

[7] Eugipp. *vit. S. Sev.* c. iv.

[8] *Ib.* c. xxiv. qua nocte Heruli insperate protinus inruentes.

express permission and sanction of the Emperor, as permanent settlers on Roman soil,[1] the chief deeming himself, at first, a military official of the Roman government, and, as the Roman administration falls to pieces, taking into his hands also the control of the civil power, collecting the taxes, dealing out justice, appointing officials,[2] combining, in fact, the offices of prefect and master of the military forces. To all these varieties of relation with Rome must be added the widest differences of religious belief among the invaders. Some, like the Franks, the Saxons, or the Huns, on their first appearance, were still pagan.[3] A number of tribes, such as the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Visigoths, or the Rugi, were Arians;[4] and among these there were various degrees of bigotry, some, like the Burgundians,[5] being comparatively tolerant, while others were inspired with a determined hostility to the Catholic faith.[6] There is another, and perhaps more important, difference to be observed. Some of the invading tribes had only recently come into contact with Roman civilisation. They had perhaps received Roman envoys, and they knew well by report the peace and prosperity which the provinces enjoyed under the Roman sway. But they were untouched by its discipline and tone. Others there were whom the culture of the South had already more than

[1] Oros. vii. 43, § 3; Prosp. *Chron.* a. 419, Constantius pacem firmat cum Wallia, data ei ad habitandum secunda Aquitania; Idat. *Chron.* a. 419, per Constantium ad Gallias revocati sedes in Aquitanica . . . acceperunt.

[2] Sid. *Ep.* v. 6, where the Burgundian Chilperic is described as magister militum; Greg. Tur. *H. Fr.* ii. 20, Eurichus autem Gotthorum rex Victorium ducem super septem civitates praeposuit. Cf. Sid. *Ep.* vii. 17.

[3] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, iv. 67, 81.

[4] Eugipp. *vit. S. Sev.* c. iv. *ad fin.*

[5] Oros. vii. 32 (in 418) speaks of the Burgundians as bound to the Romans in the Catholic faith. And Bishop Patiens is said to be in favour with Chilperic and his queen, Sid. *Ep.* vi. 12, § 3. But in the time of Avitus it is clear that members of the royal family were Arian (v. Ampère, *Hist. Lit.* ii. 202), and the people were probably divided. Greg. Tur. ii. 32 describes the people as Arian.

[6] Vict. Vitens. i. 5, 17.

half converted into Romans. Their chiefs may have held high command under the emperors, and been in friendly intercourse with the leaders of the Roman nobility. Many of the rank and file had fought under the eagles, and had acquired to some extent the discipline and habits of the Roman army. In their moral and physical characteristics also the tribes or bands, known under the names of Goths, Alans, Vandals, or Alemanni, were, according to Roman writers of this period, widely different. Salvianus[1] tells us that the Vandals were the weakest and least formidable race; the Goths chaste but faithless; the Alans were less treacherous, but licentious and rapacious; the Burgundians were of a mild and gentle disposition, and inclined to be on friendly terms with the Romans in the territories which they occupied. The Saxons, the Franks, and the Heruli retained their heathen superstitions, offered human sacrifices, and their raids were marked by acts of fierce and wanton cruelty, especially towards the Christian clergy and the inmates of monastic houses.[2] In the picture of Noricum in the life of S. Severinus, we may observe nearly all these various types in close juxtaposition and startling contrast, from the Christian and half-civilised Ostrogoth, cantoned in Pannonia, in federal relations with the Empire, to the fierce pagan Herulian. One of these tribes is on the point of moving on to seek a permanent home on Italian soil.[3] The Rugi, whose chief has come under the magnetic spell of a monk of extraordinary saintliness and heroic energy,[4] are curbed for a time, and seem to abate somewhat of their old taste for rapine and violence, and even to offer a fitful protection to the harassed pro-

[1] *De Gub. Dei*, vii. 64; cf. iv. 67.

[2] Eugipp. *vit. S. Sev.* c. xxiv., Heruli . . . plurimos duxere captivos, presbyterum patibulo suspendentes; *Carm. de Prov. Div.* 45; Hieron. *Ep.* 123, § 16.

[3] Jordan. *Get.* lvii.; cf. Pallmann, *Gesch. der Völkerwand.* ii. 419.

[4] Eugipp. *vit. S. Sev.* c. v., where Flaccitheus, the Rugian king, consults Severinus about his fears of the Goths, then in Pannonia; cf. Pallmann's scepticism about the *Life*, ii. 390.

vincials.[1] But the province was constantly overrun by other bands under various names,[2] Alemanni, Heruli, Thoringi, scouring the country in search of plunder, and seizing their prey more often by stratagem and surprise than by open force. Here one sees, as it were in miniature, and on a confined scene, many of those varieties of tribal character, and many of those different impulses and modes of attack, which may be observed in the wider field of the whole Western world.

It follows from these considerations that the period of the invasions presents a mass of complex phenomena, to which no single comprehensive formula will apply. We may expect also to find a great variety of feeling and opinion among contemporary observers as to the character of the invasions, the fate of the Empire, and its future relations to the barbarian intruders. The man who has lost everything in the sack of his town, and whose relatives have been carried into slavery by the raiders, will take a very different view of the invasion from the great noble, the walls of whose castle protect him from wandering bands, and who lives on good terms with the neighbouring chief. The Churchman, in whom Roman pride and patriotism have been weakened by enthusiastic devotion to the ascetic ideal, will not entertain the faith in the mission and destiny of imperial Rome which is an ineradicable instinct of the noble, saturated with the historic spirit of that great organisation, and still pagan in sentiment, if not in outward profession. We shall now make an attempt to ascertain the feelings of some of those who witnessed the great calamities and changes of that time.

[1] Eugipp. *vit. S. Sev.* xxii. xxxi. Feletheus promises to protect the Romans against the raids of the Alemanni and Thoringi.
[2] *Ib.* xxiv. iv. ix. xi. xix.

# CHAPTER II

## ROMAN FEELING ABOUT THE INVASIONS AND THE FUTURE OF THE EMPIRE

In the early years of the fifth century the rumours of the movements of Alaric and Radagaisus created the liveliest alarm in Italy. Even in the noble poem in which Claudian celebrates the triumph of Stilicho, full as it is of the poet's faith in Rome, we seem to feel the thrill of terror which unnerved all but the bravest in the previous year. The repair of the walls of the city by Stilicho,[1] commemorated in inscriptions which are extant, was the signal for an outbreak of superstitious terror which carries us back to the early days of the Republic. All the old omens which portended disaster were reported[2]—dreams, eclipses, causeless conflagrations, showers of stones, a comet shooting from the eastern heavens to the quarter from which the Gothic hordes had issued. Such was the terror that doubts even arose whether Rome had not reached her fated term. The augural explanation of the twelve vultures which Romulus had seen at her foundation[3] was recalled, and the fears of many blinded them to the fact that, of the twelve centuries prefigured by the birds, the last had only half run its course.[4] Many of the wealthy class

[1] *C. I. L.* vi. 1188-1190. Stilicho's name is erased from the Inscr. 1190.

[2] Claud. *de Bell. Get.* 227 *sqq.*

[3] Liv. i. 7.

[4] Claud. *de Bell. Get.* 265 :

tunc reputant annos, interceptoque volatu
vulturis, incidunt properatis saecula metis.

sought places of security, in Corsica, Sardinia, and the islands off the Etruscan coast.[1] Nay, if Claudian may be believed,[2] there were even thoughts of removing the seat of government from Italy to Gaul. Many an edict of these years [3] confirms the testimony of the poet that the Vandal adventurer, who had risen to be captain of the Roman armies, set an example of high courage and steadfastness to the degenerate nobles, who were ready to abandon without a struggle the venerable seat of order and civilisation at the first sign of danger. Yet it would appear that the panic did not last long. The behaviour of all parties in the fruitless negotiations which preceded the final rupture with Alaric and the sack of Rome shows a remarkable confidence either in the strength of the Empire, or in the moderation of the Gothic chief. On the one hand, the government of Ravenna rejected his successive offers of friendship and support.[4] On the other hand, the Roman Senate acquiesced in his tenure of the office of magister militum under Attalus, the Emperor whom by his orders they created.[5] Both the scornful rejection and the easy acceptance of his claims show that, after the first moments of alarm, Alaric was not regarded as a half-savage invader, the foe of the Roman name and of civilisation. He was after all a Christian.[6] He had served as an officer of Theodosius in the campaign against Eugenius.[7] It is true that the marshes of

[1] Claud. *de Bell. Get.* 217:

jam, jam conscendere puppes,
Sardoosque habitare sinus, et inhospita Cyrni
saxa parant, vitamque freto spumante tueri.

Rutil. Namat. i. 327. S. Jerome, writing about this time (*Ep.* 128, § 4), says, nulla est regio quae non exules Romanos habeat.

[2] Claud. *de Bell. Get.* 296 and 315:

migrantisque fugam compescuit aulae.

[3] *C. Th.* vii. 20, 12; vii. 13, 18.

[4] Zos. v. 36.

[5] *Ib.* vi. 6, 7, ἡ γερουσία . . . πᾶσιν ἐνέδωκεν οἷς Ἀλάριχος ἐκέλευσεν . . . τὰς δὲ τῶν δυνάμεων στρατηγίας αὐτῷ τε Ἀλαρίχῳ καὶ Οὐάλεντι παρέδωκεν.

[6] Oros. vii. 39, § 1; Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, i. vi.

[7] Zos. v. 5; Socr. vii. 10, Ἀλάριχος . . . τῷ βασιλεῖ Θεοδοσίῳ εἰς τὸν κατὰ Εὐγενίου τοῦ τυράννου πόλεμον συμμαχήσας, κ.τ.λ.

Ravenna, to which in the first alarm the seat of government had been removed from Milan, was a secure refuge for Honorius and his court. And it is also true that the Senate may have felt it safer to come to terms with the man who had the supplies of Rome at his mercy. Still, on neither side are there the signs of that paralysis of terror which seized the upper classes on the first news of the approach of the Goths.

But in 410, when, after the failure of all negotiations, the city had at last fallen a prey to the army of Alaric, everything was changed. Eight hundred years had passed since Rome had been violated by the Gauls of Brennus. In spite of all troubles on the frontiers, in spite of the alarms of the great invasions of the second, third, and fourth centuries, the sacred centre of government had never realised the possibility that her own stately security would ever be disturbed.[1] Not only had all true sons of Rome a religious faith in her mission and destiny, but they had good reason to rely on the awe which she inspired in the barbarous races who ranged around her frontiers.[2] There seemed an almost infinite distance between the plunder of provinces, which was so constantly and so rapidly avenged, and the violation of the heart and seat of Roman power. But now the spell was broken; the mystery and awe which surrounded the great city had been pierced and set at nought. The moral force, so much more important in government than the material, had been weakened and desecrated. The shock given by this great catastrophe to old Roman confidence and pride must, for the time, have been over-

[1] Yet after the victory of Pollentia Claudian utters the prayer, which sounds like a prophecy:

procul arceat altus
Jupiter, ut delubra Numae, sedemque Quirini,
barbaries oculis saltem temerare profanis
possit, et arcanum tanti deprendere regni.

[2] Cf. the words put into the mouth of the old Gothic warrior in Claud. *de Bell. Get.* 508:

nec numina sedem
destituunt. Jactata procul dicuntur in hostem
fulmina, divinique volant pro moenibus ignes:
seu coelum, seu Roma tonat.

whelming. Yet from all that proud aristocracy, men of letters and affairs, hardly a word has come down to tell us what they felt in the wreck of material fortune and patriotic illusions.[1] We can only conjecture their feelings on the events of the time from the words of S. Jerome, penned in his cell at Bethlehem in the year 411. Although he had fled from the world, he was still a Roman at heart, steeped in her literary culture, and proud of her great history. When the rumour of the fall of Rome reached him, he broke off his Commentary on Ezekiel;[2] his voice was choked with sobs as he thought of the capture of the great city "which had taken captive all the world." In an earlier letter, referring to the invasion of the eastern provinces,[3] he says that his soul shudders to recite the ruin of his time. For twenty years all the lands from Constantinople to the Julian Alps are daily drenched with Roman blood. The provinces are a prey to Alans, Huns, Vandals, and Marcomanni. Matrons and virgins devoted to God,[4] the noble and the priest, are made the sport of these monsters. The churches are demolished, the bones of the martyrs are dug up, horses are stabled at the altars of Christ. "The Roman world is sinking into ruin, and still we hold our heads erect. . . . Happy Nepotianus who does not see such things, who does not hear of them. Miserable are we who have to suffer them, or see our brethren suffering. And yet we wish to live, and think that those who have been taken from such a scene are to be mourned rather than deemed happy in their fate. . . . It is through our sins that the barbarians are strong; it

[1] S. Augustine complains in one of his letters that no one had sent him a full and authentic account of the calamities in Italy, probably referring to Alaric's first siege; v. *Ep.* 99, § 1.

[2] Hieron. *Ep*, 126, 127, haeret vox et singultus intercipiunt verba dictantis: Capitur urbs quae totum cepit orbem.

[3] *Ib.* 60; 123, § 16.

[4] Cf. *Carm. de Prov. Div.* 45:

quare templa Dei lienit popularier igni?
cur violata sacri vasa ministerii?
non honor innuptas devotae virginitatis
nec texit viduas religionis amor.

is owing to our vices that the Roman armies are conquered." And in a letter to a Gallic lady, he speaks with horror of the countless hordes who have swept from the Rhine to the Pyrenees. Great cities, like Mainz, Rheims, Nantes have been wiped out; the provinces of Aquitaine, Lyons, and Narbonne have been desolated; thousands have been butchered even in the churches; and famine has completed the work of the sword. There was perhaps exaggeration in the rumours which found their way to the distant monastery at Bethlehem. And the warm imagination and vehement rhetoric of S. Jerome have probably deepened the colours of the tragic tales of massacre and sacrilege which reached him. The interest of his words for us lies in the passionate regret felt by the true Roman, and the lesson drawn by the Christian ascetic. The same lesson we shall find taught with even greater emphasis by another Christian moralist who had himself witnessed the invasion of Gaul.[1]

S. Jerome's description of the disasters of the time may seem exaggerated in the light of the sixty or seventy years which followed. Yet there can be no doubt that the moral effect of the capture was for the moment overwhelming. Immense numbers of the various corporations,[2] who were bound to certain crafts and functions, fled from the city. This must have caused a great dislocation of the social life of the capital. And in the year 412 an edict of the Emperor orders all governors of provinces to compel the return of these fugitives to their proper functions.[3] There was also a second exodus of many of the upper class, who fled to Africa and the East. One case of which we possess the details will help us to realise the fate of these noble exiles. The Demetrias,

[1] Salv. *de Gub Dei*, vii. § 108, sola nos morum nostrorum vitia vicerunt.

[2] The corporati included the pistores, cataholenses, suarii, pecuarii, mancipes thermarum; *v.* Godefroy's Paratitlon, *C. Th.* xiv. 2.

[3] *C. Th.* xiv. 2, 4; cf. xiv. 7, 2, and *Nov. Th.* 26.

whose ascetic devotion drew forth the extravagant laudations of S. Jerome, was a member of one of the noblest and wealthiest houses among the Roman aristocracy. The Anicii appear in the consular lists for many years. One of her ancestors was proconsul of Africa in the reign of Valerian, another was colleague of Aurelian in the consulship, and a third held the same great office in the early years of the reign of Constantine.[1] Her grandfather, Sex. Petronius Probus, had filled more important offices than any man of his time.[2] The father and uncle of Demetrias, who were the consuls of 395, have been immortalised in a poem of Claudian. Demetrias and her grandmother, Faltonia Proba, having ransomed themselves from the Goths, and having hired a vessel at one of the Italian ports, effected their escape, amid great hardships, to Africa.[3] But when they landed there, they had, in the words of S. Jerome, to encounter a monster more cruel than any in the legends of the Western seas. Count Heraclian was then governor of the province,[4] a man with an insatiable thirst for wine and for gold. He was the assassin of Stilicho, and the successor of Olympius in the leadership of the Catholic party. But his religious principles were compatible with the grossest and most heartless cruelty to women and to fellow-Christians. He had mustered a crowd of Syrian slave-dealers in the African ports, who were ready to purchase the hapless refugees; and many a Roman lady of noble birth was consigned by this ruffian to the ignominy of an Eastern harem. Proba and her grand-daughter were compelled

[1] See Seeck's *Sym.* xci., with the Stemma of the family.

[2] Cf. Aus. *Ep.* xvi. 19, Probo P.P.:

dico hunc Senati praesulem,
praefectum eundem et consulem,
(nam consul aeternum cluet)
collegam Augusti consulis,
columen curulis Romulae.

See the epitaph of Probus in *C. I. L.* vi. 1756.

[3] Hieron. *Ep.* 130, § 7, quae de medio mari fumantem viderat patriam, et fragili cymbae salutem suam suorumque commiserat, crudeliora invenit Africae litora.

[4] Zos. v. 37. He was made governor of Africa as his reward for the murder of Stilicho. Cf. Oros. vii. 42, § 10.

to purchase their freedom, or save their honour, by an enormous ransom.[1] Others of their class found their way to S. Jerome's monastery at Bethlehem in a state of the greatest destitution. The number of these visitors was so great that the saint, although his hospitality was boundless, sometimes found his studious labours sadly disturbed.[2]

In the meantime, the recovery of confidence and equanimity at Rome itself seems to have been rapid. It is probable that the slaughter and material damage inflicted by Alaric have been exaggerated. The ancient authorities give very different accounts of the matter. According to some, there was wholesale massacre,[3] and senators were tortured and put to death in large numbers;[4] the city was ravaged with fire,[5] and most of the great works of art were destroyed.[6] On the other hand, Orosius,[7] writing only a few years after the sack, states that, while some buildings were burnt down, Alaric gave orders to his soldiers to content themselves with plunder and to abstain from bloodshed. Jordanes even asserts that the Goths did not set fire to any buildings, and that by Alaric's command they confined themselves to pillage.[8] The probabilities of the case are all in favour of the less tragic view of the catastrophe. The three days, during which the Goths remained within the walls, were short enough for the collection of the enormous spoil which Alaric carried off in his southward march. S. Augustine, who took a gloomy enough view of the event, distinctly says that very few senators were put to death.[9] It is probable that fire may have broken

[1] Proba returned to Rome, having recovered some part of her property. See the inscriptions to her memory in *C.I.L.* vi. 1754.

[2] Hieron. *Ep.* 71, § 5; cf. *Ep.* 147.

[3] Proc. *de Bell. Vand.* i. 2.

[4] Socr. *Hist. Eccl.* vii. 10.

[5] Hieron. *Ep.* 128, urbs inclyta . . . uno hausta est incendio.

[6] Socr. *Hist. Eccl.* vii. 10, πολλὰ τῶν θαυμαστῶν ἐκείνων κατέκαυσαν.

[7] Oros. vii. 38.

[8] Jordan, *Get.* c. 30, spoliant tantum, non autem, ut solent gentes, igne supponunt, etc.

[9] *De Civ. Dei*, iii. c. 29, Gothi vero tam multis Senatoribus pepercerunt ut magis mirum sit quod aliquos peremerunt.

out here and there, but the only great building which is positively known to have been burnt down was the palace of Sallust,[1] of which the ruins were still standing in the time of Procopius. Even if Alaric had not been restrained by policy from a wholesale and wanton destruction of great masterpieces of art, his Goths could not have wrought such havoc in so short a time. But the most convincing argument is derived from the poem of Rutilius Namatianus, who, as he bids a reluctant farewell to the city which he regards with a passionate love and reverence,[2] sees only the crowded monuments of her glory, and has his eyes dazzled by the radiance of her glittering fanes.[3]

The remains of Rutilius are of great value, because he is almost the only man of the last pagan generation from whom we can learn something of the feelings of his class about the future of the Empire in the face of its perils. He was a pagan of the pagans, imbued, as we have seen,[4] with a mingled hatred and contempt for the new ascetic spirit which had peopled the islands of the Tyrrhene Sea with men "who are as much afraid to enjoy the gifts of fortune as to face its reverses."[5] His paternal estates in Gaul had been ravaged by the invaders.[6] The ruins of his home, the streams and groves of his desolated lands, he feels, are calling him to repair the waste. Yet he betrays no symptom of despair. Three years after the siege he had held the office of prefect of the city.[7] He may have actually seen the Goths within the walls. But there is hardly a hint that any serious event has

[1] Proc. *de Bell. Vand.* i. 2.

[2] Rutil. Namat. i. 47.

[3] *Ib.* i. 93:

confunduntque vagos delubra micantia visus.

[4] *Ib.* i. 440; v. *supra* p. 46.

[5] *Ib.* i. 445:

quaenam perversi rabies tam stulti cerebri,
dum mala formides, nec bona posse pati.

[6] *Ib.* i. 25.

[7] *Ib.* i. 157-160; cf. Seeck's *Sym.* clxxx. His father Lachanius had held several offices, among others that of consularis Tusciae, *C. Th.* ii. 4, 5.

occurred.[1] The temples of the gods are still standing in their dazzling radiance under the serene Italian sky.[2] The cheers of the spectators in the circus reach his ears as his ship still lingers in the Tiber.[3] He feels a passionate regret at quitting "this fair queen of the world," so mighty, so merciful,[4] so bounteous, whose visible splendour is only the faint symbol of her worldwide and godlike sway. Certainly there is here no querulous and faint-hearted lamentation over a crushing and appalling disaster. The troubles of the time, referred to in a few vague phrases, are treated as merely vicissitudes of fortune, such as Rome has known before, and from which she has always risen with renewed vitality.[5] The enemies of Rome have always repented their success. "Victoris Brenni non distulit Allia poenam." This faith in the star of Rome, expressed with such genuine enthusiasm, seems in Rutilius not to be founded on the consciousness of material strength. It is rather a religious feeling springing from a clear perception of the true mission of Rome and the nature of her services to humanity: "Quod regnas minus est quam quod regnare mereris."[6] The triumphs of Rome have been triumphs of law and equal justice for the vanquished. The child of Mars and Venus,[7] she has united love and tenderness to warlike might; and so has she made of the earth with its divers peoples a single country.[8] Here Orosius and Rutilius, the Christian and the pagan, join hands. "Rome," says Orosius[9] in effect, "has stripped exile of its terrors. Wherever I go, I find my fatherland, I come as a Roman among Romans." But the pagan noble has a

[1] Rutil. Namat. ii. 50:
et captiva prius quam caperetur erat;
cf. i. 39.
[2] *Ib.* i. 197.
[3] *Ib.* i. 201.
[4] *Ib.* i. 69:
mitigat armatas victrix clementia vires.
[5] *Ib.* i. 119 *sqq.*
[6] *Ib.* i. 91.
[7] *Ib.* i. 67.
[8] *Ib.* i. 63.
[9] Oros. v. 2, 1, ubique patria, ubique lex et religio mea est . . . quia ad Christianos et Romanos Romanus et Christianus accedo.

greater faith than the Christian priest in the future of the Roman sway. Rising superior to all the vicissitudes of fortune, she is to receive the submission of the trembling Goth;[1] the pacified nations are still to pay her tribute and pour their wealth into her bosom; she may, with no term set to her dominion, extend her laws over the coming ages,[2] and have no fear of the distaff of the Fates. Such were the hopes or beliefs of one who may have seen the Goth in possession of Rome, and who was returning to find the same Gothic host settled in his native Aquitaine. What secret misgivings Rutilius may have had we can never know, or how he fared when he found himself once more on his ravaged estate. His life, which is known to us only for a moment, is, like his poem, a mere fragment, a bit of wreckage, as it were, appearing for an instant on the waves and then lost to sight for ever. His is the almost solitary voice which reaches us directly from that generation of the high aristocracy of Rome, which, from whatever cause, pride, grief, confidence in the stability of a great civilisation, or from the cruelty of time in engulfing all record of its feelings, is now as silent as if it had never been.

In the very year in which Rutilius Namatianus was returning from his prefecture to Gaul, Orosius, the young Spanish disciple of S. Augustine, was composing his historical answer to the pagan cry that Rome had perished in the Christian times. This work has been already referred to in an account of the last open conflict between Christian and pagan in the West.[3] It was composed primarily to confute the open accusations of the heathen remnant, and to quiet the uneasiness of doubters on the Christian side. Orosius employed a limited erudition and a boundless licence of assertion to prove that the pre-Christian ages had been scourged

[1] Rutil. Namat. i. 142.

[2] *Ib.* i. 133:

porrige victuras Romana in saecula leges,
solaque fatales non vereare colos.

[3] v. *supra*, p. 67.

with every form of calamity in a degree unknown to his contemporaries, and to deepen every shadow in the history of the past. But worthless as his work is for its main purpose, it has a great value for the light which it throws on the possible future attitude of the Church to the barbarians.

A necessary complement of the view which Orosius took of past history was his determined resolve to minimise the convulsions and the sufferings of his own time. He had suffered personally in the Vandal invasion of Spain;[1] he must have witnessed some of the horrors described in the Chronicle of Idatius.[2] Yet he can speak of the capture of Rome as a single act of brigandage in a world enjoying general tranquillity.[3] The Goths, in their first onset, might be fierce and rapacious, but they were after all fellow-Christians. Their chief had kept inviolate the Christian churches;[4] the soldiers, in the midst of their pillage, had formed a singular procession to escort the sacred vessels to the basilica of S. Peter, singing hymns as they went. They had no hatred of Rome, no wish to overthrow her empire. Rather their great chiefs, Alaric and Ataulphus, had a singular reverence for Rome.[5] Their strongest wish was to be admitted to any settlement which Rome might assign to them,[6] and they were ready, in return for the boon, to protect her and to restore her power. In his native country Orosius had seen the Germans turning from brigandage and slaughter to the cultivation of the fields. They were beginning to live on terms of amity and good-fellowship with their Roman neighbours, many of whom preferred the rule of the barbarians to the crushing exactions of the Roman treasury.[7]

[1] Oros. iii. 20, 5. His native region was probably Tarraconensis; cf. vii. 22, nos quoque in Hispania Tarraconem *nostram*... ostendimus.

[2] Idat. *Chron.*, debacchantibus per Hispanias barbaris, etc.

[3] Oros. iii. 20, 9.

[4] *Ib.* vii. 39.

[5] *Ib.* vii. 43.

[6] *Ib.* i. 16, 3, exiguae habitationis sedem non ex sua electione sed ex nostro judicio rogant.

[7] *Ib.* vii. 41, 7, barbari execrati gladios suos ad aratra conversi sunt

Salvianus tells us the same thing. But Salvianus wrote more than a generation after Orosius. And it is creditable to the insight and candour of Orosius that he should so soon and so clearly have perceived the more hopeful side of the barbarian invasions, and the promise of a rapprochement between the Romans and their invaders. He shows far more discernment and detachment from prejudice than the statesmen of Ravenna who rejected the overtures of Alaric, and compassed the death of Stilicho. In Orosius we see the Church already adapting herself to altered conditions, and willing to come to terms with the new forces.

If we ask what Orosius thinks of the condition and future destiny of Rome, we obtain a somewhat uncertain reply. On the one hand, in spite of all her disasters, Rome still retains her imperial sway intact;[1] on the other, the mighty mass of the once omnipotent Roman commonwealth is beginning to feel the decrepitude of age.[2] Rome will have her term, like the empires of the past, like all things human. Her power was founded on force, and won by bloody conquests, which caused far greater misery over vast spaces of the world than any inflicted by the Gothic inroads.[3] And yet her rule has given a period of extraordinary tranquillity, order, and prosperity to the nations whom she conquered.[4] If you have to fly from one province, you can find a home, a country, everywhere—"ubique patria, ubique lex, et religio

residuosque Romanos ut socios modo et amicos fovent ut inveniantur jam inter eos quidam Romani qui malint inter barbaros pauperem libertatem quam inter Romanos tributariam sollicitudinem sustinere. Compare with this *de Gub. Dei.* v. 26, ac sic actum est ut latrociniis judicum strangulati homines et necati incipierent esse quasi barbari, quia non permittebantur esse Romani.

[1] Oros. ii. 3, opibus spoliata non regno, manet adhuc et regnat incolumis.

[2] *Ib.* ii. 6, 14, illae quondam Romanae reipublicae moles nunc magis imbecillitate propriae senectutis quam alienis concussae viribus contremescunt.

[3] *Ib.* v. 1, 4.

[4] *Ib.* v. 1, 12, inquietudo bellorum qua illi attriti sunt nobis ignota est . . . in otio nos nascimur et senescimus. An extraordinary statement to be made in the second decade of the fifth century!

mea est."[1] The Roman peace, the Roman culture, Romania, is greater than Rome and will survive her. And along with this cosmopolitan feeling, there is here and there a curious emergence of provincial patriotism, the faint dawn, as it were, of modern nationality. More than once, by a sort of patriotic irrelevance, Orosius enlarges on the stubborn resistance which the Spaniards offered to the Roman generals,[2] and the sufferings from famine and slaughter endured by his countrymen during the struggles of two hundred years. While recognising the peace and happiness which the Roman Empire had given the world since the coming of Christ, he is hardly so ready as S. Augustine to do justice to the manly virtue by which the Empire was won.[3] His sympathy is rather for the conquered races. Rome subdued the world to gratify her love of dominion, her lust for gold and luxury. The blessings which her rule has diffused are due to the Divine will which has guided the course of history.

Between Orosius at the beginning of the century, and Salvianus and Sidonius who wrote towards its close, we have little to tell us how the Romans regarded the course of events. The great lettered and noble class is absolutely silent. The sons and grandsons of the generation of Symmachus, the immediate ancestors of the generation of Sidonius, though they witnessed the conquest of Roman Africa by the Vandals, the invasion of Gaul by Attila, the settlement of the Visigoths in Aquitaine, have not left even a fragment to inform us as to their fortunes, their hopes, or their fears. The only message we have from that generation comes in three

[1] Oros. v. 2, 1.

[2] *Ib.* v. 4, the victories of Viriathus; v. 7, the war with Numantia; v. 19, Sertorius; vii. 34, Trajan and Theodosius of Spanish origin; cf. Mörner, pp. 37, 38; Ebert, *Lit. des. Mittelalters*, p. 344.

[3] *De Civ. Dei*, ii. 2; ii. 29, O indoles Romana laudabilis, O progenies Regulorum, Scaevolarum, Scipionum, Fabriciorum, haec potius concupisce; cf. *Ep.* 138, § 17, rempublicam quam primi Romani constituerunt auxeruntque virtutibus.

poems, composed by Christians and ascetics who had seen with their own eyes the great invasion of Gaul at the beginning of the century. And it is curious to contrast with the hopeful optimism of Orosius the horror and grief of these writers at what seems to them to be the death-agony of the Roman world.

The poems entitled *Ad Uxorem* and *De Providentia Divina*,[1] which used to be wrongly attributed to S. Prosper,[2] and the *Commonitorium*,[3] of S. Orientius are, as it were, the solitary voices which come to us from the dim mass of the generation who witnessed the Suevic and Vandal invasions. In phrases, often almost identical, they describe the suffering and terror of the time. The country is smoking like one great funeral pyre.[4] Its strongest and fairest cities have been given up to fire and sword. Nothing has escaped the violence of the invaders, castles on apparently inaccessible rocks,[5] the lonely hermitage buried in the woods,[6] churches guarded by the relics of saints and martyrs[7]—no place, however strong or remote or sacred, was safe from their attacks. The aged priest has been driven into slavery with his flock,[8] the mother with her child,[9] the master with his servants. On all sides there is nothing but war, confusion, and the treachery of fellow-citizens.[10] Peace seems to have

[1] The author of the *De Prov. Div.* was a native of Southern Gaul and had seen the invasion of the Vandals and Goths, v. 34. The poem was probably composed about 415; *v.* Ebert, 317, n. 4.

[2] It has a taint of Pelagianism (v. 233, 240, 585) of which S. Prosper was a prominent opponent; *v.* Migne's ed. col. 615; Ebert, i. 319.

[3] The *Commonitorium* was probably composed in the second decade of the fifth century, Ebert. i. 410; cf. Ellis, Pref. to his ed. (*Corp. Scrip. Eccl.*) of the *Commonitorium*, p. 194.

[4] *Commonit.* ii. 184:

uno fumavit Gallia tota rogo.

*Carm. de Prov. Div.* 17:

animum patriae subiit fumantis imago.

[5] *Commonit.* ii. 169; *Carm. de Prov. Div.* 35.

[6] *Commonit.* ii. 170.

[7] *Carm. de Prov. Div.* 45.

[8] *Ib.* 59.

[9] *Commonit.* ii. 177.

[10] *Ad Uxorem*, 26:

undique bella fremunt . . .
pax abiit terris, ultima quaeque vides

Cf. *Commonit.* ii. 174:

multis
causa fuit mortis civica proditio;

Hieron. *Ep.* 118, § 2; 123, § 4, referring to the same events.

quitted the world for ever, and the end of all things is at hand. It is probable, as has often been pointed out, that there may be a good deal of exaggeration in these descriptions, and a good deal of sacred rhetoric with a religious purpose. Yet we are bound to take account of the impression made at the time on a certain class of minds. The trouble is not by them regarded, as Orosius regarded it, as almost trivial compared with the slaughter and rapine and pestilence of former ages. It is not local and temporary. The fabric of the civilised world is tottering. Men are abandoning hope in its permanence and seem to feel themselves on the edge of the abyss. The poem on the Providence of God dwells specially on the fact that many were losing faith in the government of the world by a righteous God. The spectacle of wholesale and indiscriminate ruin,[1] of the virtuous and the wicked overtaken by the same doom, drove men back to the conception of an iron fate, or of an epicurean deity sitting aloof from the world, powerless over its destiny, coldly pitiless of its woes.[2] And along with the atheistic philosophies of the past returned also its pagan superstitions. Refusing to believe in a controlling Providence, men once more began to interrogate the stars[3] as to the meaning of the sudden arrest of civilisation, or as to their own personal fortunes in the misery and chaos of the time. Many years afterwards we shall find that Salvianus has still to contend against the same spirit of unbelief.

[1] *Carm. de Prov. Div.* 52:

idem turbo bonos sustulit atque malos.

[2] *Ib.* 715:

scrutatis igitur stellarum motibus hoc est
artis opus, totam subvertere religionem;
dum nullum curare Deum mortalia suadet, etc.

[3] This was forbidden by a long series of laws. In the year 409, Honorius orders the expulsion of mathematici, *C. Th.* ix. 16, 12. But they are found in Rome again in 410, when Attalus consulted them (Zos. vi. 7). Sidonius represents the wife of Aetius as consulting the stars, *Carm.* v. 259; cf. Sid. *Ep.* viii. 11. Lampridius of Bordeaux believed in astrology. Not without reason S. Aug. *de Civ. Dei*, viii. 19, attacks this superstition. Cf. Maury's *La Magie*, c. vi.

Orosius wrote to refute the cavils of the last generation of pagans, who found in the misfortunes of the Empire an argument against the adoption of Christianity as the national faith. Salvianus, separated from Orosius by more than a generation, had an equally controversial purpose; but his work is aimed at the scepticism of professed Christians[1] who were disturbed by the calamities, the imminent overthrow, of a society which had definitely placed itself under the protection of the Cross. Orosius had to oppose the convictions of men who thought the world was suffering from the abandonment of an old faith, under the protection of which it had prospered. Salvianus had to deal with the doubts of the votaries of the new faith, under which the world had suffered what were thought unexampled disasters. The treatise *De Gubernatione Dei* was probably written before 451 and after 439.[2] It is perhaps fortunate for its controversial purpose that it was composed before the victory of the Roman arms at Châlons.

In spite of all the faults of Orosius as a historian, it may well be questioned whether his treatise is not of greater historical value than that of Salvianus. The object of Orosius is to show that Rome had suffered even worse calamities when she worshipped her ancient gods than she did in Christian times. And he is probably not wrong at least when he maintains that the invasions of the reign of Gallienus caused quite as much misery and terror as the invasions of the reign of Honorius.[3]

[1] See the opening words of the *de Gub. Dei*, incuriosus a quibusdam et quasi neglegens humanorum actuum deus dicitur utpote nec bonos custodiens nec coercens malos.

[2] Ebert, i. 459, n. 5. He mentions the defeat of Litorius in 439 (vii. 40, Prosp. *Chron.* ad a.), and he is silent about the defeat of Attila in 451. Teuffel says the latter event was unknown to him. But the defeat of Attila may have been ignored by a writer whose thesis is the superiority of barbarian virtue. The reference in vi. 67 (obsessa est urbs) is to Alaric's, not to Genseric's capture of Rome. Salvianus lived possibly till 495 (Gennad. *Script. Ill.* 67, vivit usque hodie; v. Teuffel, § 462 n. 4; cf. Ebert, i. 448 n.).

[3] Oros. vii. 22, 7.

Only once or twice does he strike the dominant note of Salvianus, that it was the theatre, the sensual pleasures of the Roman world, which had drawn down the judgments of heaven.[1] The great object of Salvianus is to heighten the horror of the catastrophe that he may make the moral more impressive. He promises (though the promise is unfulfilled) to prove, as S. Augustine held, that the ancient Romans won and enjoyed their rule by a manly, natural virtue.[2] But the Romans of his day have lost their dominion, and suffered in person and estate, because they are sunk in sensual pleasure, because they have exchanged the sober and strenuous energy of their ancestors for a soft, luxurious and frivolous temper, without nerve to cope with danger, without even enough of imagination to realise it.[3] "The Roman world goes laughing to its death." The invasions are the proper penalty for heinous guilt and thorough corruption of character. The invaders may be Arians,[4] they may be heathens, they have their vices; but in spite of blindness to spiritual truth, the result of faulty teaching or early association, in spite of cruelty and treachery, they are morally far superior to the Roman population. Although they have been denied the full light of the Catholic faith, yet they have never sunk to the level of the Christians of Aquitaine, where every estate is a scene of wholesale debauchery.[5] The Vandals may be a weak and cowardly people,[6] yet they have overthrown the

[1] Oros. iv. 21, 5, theatra incusanda non tempora.

[2] Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, vii. 2, si deus annuit cum ad eam negotii partem accesserimus, ut de veteribus Romanis aliqua dicantur, evidenter divino munere adprobabimus tam justum tunc erga illos fuisse domini favorem quam nunc erga nos justam severitatem; cf. Ebert, i. 463.

[3] *De Gub. Dei*, vi. 80, ita cunctos crimina sua presserant, ut nec metuerent periculum suum; praenoscebatur captivitas nec formidibatur; cf. vi. 72.

[4] *Ib.* iv. 61, 62. He divides them into heretics and pagans, the latter including the Saxons, Franks, Gepidae, and Huns; cf. iv. 81. On the heretic Goths and Vandals cf. v. 14.

[5] *Ib.* vii. 14 *sqq.*

[6] *Ib.* vii. 27, sed ideo ille infirmissimis hostibus cuncta tradidit, ut ostenderet scilicet non vires valere,

stately Roman civilisation of Africa, and, with its power, they have swept away its abominations of nameless vice.[1] A righteous God has given them that great heritage, to punish the enormous corruption of the Christian and Roman world. Nor does Salvianus find the contrast less marked between the Romans and Germans as political rulers. The oppression and peculation of the imperial officials, and the insolent and fraudulent devices of the upper class to evade their share of the public burdens and to crush their poorer neighbours, are probably better grounded accusations than the charge of universal sensuality. For as to the fiscal and economic chaos, the rhetoric of Salvianus is only too amply supported by the repeated, but apparently disregarded, edicts of a long line of emperors. It is here that the priest of Marseilles throws a searching light on the actual condition of Roman society, and on the feeling of the oppressed towards the new barbarian powers.

In the passionate declamation of Salvianus against the selfish individualism of the privileged class, and his equally passionate sympathy with the needy and friendless, we seem to hear the tones of modern democratic statesmanship. Even the curiales, the middling proprietors, whose position seems to a modern inquirer the most hopeless in the Roman social system, are treated by Salvianus as cruel oppressors of those beneath them.[2] All his pity is reserved for the poor peasant, who, exposed to the fraudulent arts or high-handed oppression of the tax-gatherer and the rich proprietor, has only two courses open to him: either he must place himself under the patronage and protection of some wealthy neighbour,

sed causam, etc.; cf. Oros. vii. 38, 1, Stilico, Vandalorum imbellis, avarae, perfidae, et dolosae gentis genere editus.

[1] *De Gub. Dei*, vii. 63 *sqq.*, ita enim generale in eis malum impuritatis est, ut quicumque ex eis impudicus esse desierit, Afer non esse videatur; cf. vii. 84-87.

[2] *Ib.* v. 18, quae enim sunt . . . urbes ubi non quot curiales fuerint tot tyranni sunt.

forfeiting probably both the poor remnant of his property and his freedom; or he must leave all behind, and settle in a district under the sway of a Gothic chief.[1] To many the latter alternative seemed preferable. There is nothing in the work of Salvianus more remarkable than the frank admission that, in humanity and justice, the Goth far excelled the Roman,[2] and that many Romans of that day preferred the government of the Goth.

We are trying to get a conception of the thoughts of the Romans of the fifth century about the barbarians and the fate of the Empire. Orosius and Salvianus are the men from whom we can gather most to satisfy our curiosity. They wrote, it is true, with a controversial or didactic purpose. They are not calm scientific observers and reasoners; but they are the only writers of that century known to us who faced the problems raised by the German invasions, and who tried to find an answer to the questions which must have forced themselves on thoughtful minds. When we compare them with one another, it is not difficult to perceive that in the thirty years which separate the two works, men's ideas as to the meaning of the invasions have undergone a change. Orosius makes light of the barbarian conquests, and, though with some reserve, he does not despair of the future of Rome. He admits that the Germans can be self-restrained in the hour of victory, and that they are willing to come to terms with their Roman neighbours. But he does not dwell, like Salvianus, on the virtues of the conquerors or the vices of those whom they have defeated. After all, he seems to think, the Roman world is civilised and Christian, and it may tame and absorb its assailants. He feels profoundly what Rome has done for the world, by the diffusion of peace and law and culture over so many countries, and he thinks the barbarians may submit to the marvellous influence which, since the

[1] *De Gub. Dei*, v. 37. [2] *Ib.* v. 15.

coming of Christ, had made of so many peoples one commonwealth. But Salvianus had seen many things which Orosius did not live to see. In the interval between them, the Vandals had shaken Roman civilisation in Africa to its base. The Gothic power had securely established itself in Southern Gaul. The Roman authority in Spain was confined to a corner in the north-east. The Burgundians were steadily advancing from the middle Rhine towards the valleys of the Rhone and Isère.[1] In the meantime the imperial power was growing daily weaker, and its administration more oppressive and corrupt. And the upper class were taking advantage of the paralysis of the government and of the economic chaos to aggrandise themselves, unrestrained by any public spirit or feelings of pity for the distressed. Can we wonder, then, that to the eye of Salvianus the Empire seems almost in its last throes, while the Germans, in their victorious strength, seem to hold the future in their grasp? Salvianus, as we have seen, has probably exaggerated the sensual excesses of his countrymen, as he has probably idealised the purity of German morality; but he discerned the real weaknesses of Rome, the crushing taxation, the cruelty of the official class, the selfish rapacity of the rich, which made many Romans welcome the humaner rule of the Gothic chief. In an age of fierce intolerance, it is singular to find a Catholic extolling the superior virtue of men who denied the deity of Christ. He praises not only their chastity, but their justice, their kindliness to one another, even their tolerance towards those who anathematised

[1] From the Panegyric on Majorian by Sidonius, *Carm.* v. 575-76,

Lugdunumque tuam, dum praeteris, aspice victor,

written 458 (Mommsen, Praef. li.; cf. *Carm.* xiii.), it is clear that Lyons was not in Burgundian hands at that time; but it must have become theirs soon afterwards. The arguments of De Coulanges to prove that there is no continuity between the settlement of 413 (Prosp. *Chron.* ad a.) and later Burgundian history are perhaps more ingenious than convincing (*L'Inv.* pp. 446 *sqq.*).

them as heretics.[1] The invasions were terrible in their inevitable slaughter and rapine. But they were not nearly so terrible as the riot of gross vice and shameless oppression of which they were the deserved punishment. Salvianus has no faith in the stability of Roman government, or in the future of Roman society. The ancient Republic, he says,[2] was strong and wealthy because its citizens despised wealth and luxury, and were ready to sacrifice everything for the State. But in his own time the public treasury is empty, while the rich are growing daily richer and more rapacious. Christianity has failed to regenerate the Roman world. The future belongs to the barbarians.

The last authority to whom we shall refer on the subject of this chapter is Apollinaris Sidonius of Auvergne. His works have been already used for the light which they throw on the life of that wealthy and noble class which Salvianus overwhelms with his anathemas. We turn to them once more to discover what were the views and feelings of a great aristocrat, regarded also as the foremost literary man of his age, about the new barbarian forces, under whose shadow his life was passed, and about that imperial power three of whose last holders he celebrated on their accession. Yet, in spite of his great advantages as an observer, we must not promise ourselves too much help from Sidonius in our present inquiry. He has not the historian's or statesman's breadth of view. He has not the detachment of men like Orosius and Salvianus.

Sidonius belongs to a different world from that of Orosius and Salvianus. He has not their consuming earnestness and seriousness of purpose. He was a good

[1] *De Gub. Dei*, vii. 39, cum . . . illi etiam in alienis (Catholicis) Episcopis deum honorarent . . .

[2] *Ib.* i. 10 *sqq.*, nisi forte antiquis illis priscae virtutis viris, Fabiis, Fabriciis, Cincinnatis, grave fuisse existimamus, quod pauperes erant qui divites esse nolebant, cum omnia scilicet studia . . . ad communia emolumenta conferrent, etc.

patriot, and in his later years a devoted bishop; yet he never ceased to be the grand seigneur, believing in his own order with implicit faith, sharing to the full all its love of stateliness and splendour, and its passion for high place and distinction. Above all, he is essentially a literary man, of the stamp which that age of decadence most admired. He is a stylist, not a thinker or inquirer. There is little doubt that he valued his own compositions not for their substance, but for those characteristics of style which we now think most worthless or even repulsive in them, the childish conceits, the meaningless antitheses, the torture applied to language so as to give an air of interest and distinction to the trivial commonplace of a colourless and monotonous existence, the crowding reminiscences of history and mythology applied to characters and situations remote from any world of miracle or romance. Yet, in spite of all its vices, this minute word-painting has some value to the historian. It enables him to revive the picture of Gallo-Roman life in the evening light before darkness finally settles on the West. It also gives us a vivid glimpse of the society of the capital in the years which followed its capture by the Vandals. Above all, though Sidonius has no very great insight into the real meaning of events, he has left us a series of pictures of the Germans, the minute faithfulness and realistic truth of which can hardly be exaggerated.

The early life and associations of Sidonius gave him peculiar advantages for the study of the barbarians. Eleven years before his birth the Visigoths had obtained a settlement in Aquitaine.[1] During his boyhood and youth they were making constant efforts to extend their territory to the south and east. He must have heard many a tale of the relief of Narbonne, in 436,[2] by

[1] Prosp. *Chron.* ad a. 419, Constantius patricius pacem firmat cum Wallia, data ei ad habitandum secunda Aquitania.

[2] *Ib.* ad a. 419, Isidoro et Senatore Coss.

Litorius with his cavalry, and of the defeat and captivity of the same gallant, but over-adventurous, soldier in 439 at Toulouse.[1] He probably heard from the lips of Avitus, whose daughter he married, the story of that encounter before a fortress in Auvergne,[2] so like a tale of the Middle Ages, in which Avitus challenged and overthrew in single combat one of the Hun troopers of Litorius, who were ravaging in their passage the lands which they were engaged to defend. Avitus was one of the lieutenants of Aetius who, for thirty years, till he fell by the hands of Valentinian III., was the foremost general of Rome, and the great stay of her power in the province of Gaul. Franks and Burgundians were pressing down from the Rhine, and the Goths, with intervals of peace, were striving to extend their power from the West. Auvergne alone was left in quiet. But her foremost noble, the future Emperor, was in all those years foremost in the struggles and diplomacy of the time. When the Hun invasion of 451 broke on Gaul, Avitus bore a prominent part in securing the help of the Visigoths against the invader. He was a power at the Gothic court,[3] and he helped to give a tincture of Roman culture to the sons of the Gothic chief who fell fighting for Rome on the plains of Châlons.[4] Five years after that great battle he was raised by the united voice of Goths and Romans to the imperial throne. Accustomed from his earliest youth to associate with men who, like Avitus, made it a cardinal principle of their policy to maintain friendly relations with the Goths, Sidonius is justly regarded as a unique authority on the relations of Gallo-Romans and barbarians.

No one can read the many graphic sketches which

[1] Prosp. *Chron.* ad a. 419, Litorius . . . dum aruspicum responsis et daemonum significationibus fidit, pugnam cum Gothis imprudenter conseruit.

[2] Apoll. Sid. *Carm.* vii. 246.

[3] *Ib.* vii. 342:
et populis Geticis sola est tua gratia limes.

[4] *Ib.* vii. 497; Jordan. *Get.* xl. xli.

Sidonius gives of the various peoples then sweeping across the Roman Empire, without perceiving that the author had studied them close at hand. Salvianus is incessantly declaiming about the virtues of the barbarians, but we could well spare some of the declamation for a little life-like colouring. Sidonius, on the other hand, is an artist in words, although his art is very perverse and corrupt; and he pleases himself with microscopic fidelity of detail in rendering the minutest physical traits, the dress and habits of these races towards whom he felt at once curiosity and fastidious dislike. If he did not witness the great struggle with the army of Attila in 451, he had probably often seen the Hun troopers, with whose aid Aetius and Litorius,[1] in many a battle from the Rhine to the Garonne, kept the barbarians at bay for years; and, in the Panegyric on Anthemius,[2] we can almost hear the rush of that terrible cavalry, with their flattened noses and cavernous, yet piercing, eyes, lean-flanked and broad of chest, bestriding their horses as if horse and man were one. There is not a tribe which crossed the Rhine or harried the coasts of Gaul in those years,[3] whose features or equipment is not flashed on us in some vivid phrase. The Burgundians, who established themselves in his native Lyons, were on the whole friendly neighbours. But they had habits which offended the taste and senses of the Roman gentleman. They greased their hair with rancid butter,[4] they sustained their gigantic bulk by ravenous feeding on the most unsavoury messes, and they deafened their guest with the harshness and loudness of their voices. The fierce Herulian, unrivalled for speed in running, has his cheeks tattooed a bluish green, like the colour of the waves.[5] You see the Gothic elders trooping to the

[1] Prosp. *Chron.* ad a. 425, 435, 436, 437, 439.
[2] Sid. *Carm.* ii. 243.
[3] Cf. *ib.* v. 476; vii. 234, 320.
[4] *Ib.* xii. 6.
[5] *Ep.* viii. 9; *Carm.* vii. 236.

council in garments of wild beasts' skins, falling scarcely to the knee.[1] Fiercest and most daring of all is the Saxon ranging along the Breton coasts in his coracle of hides, with his blue fearless eyes, ever appearing when least expected, vanishing as suddenly as he came, for whom shipwreck has no terrors, to whom the sea is a familiar companion, who butchers his captives to gratify his gods.[2] The Frank stands out on the canvas,[3] with his blue-gray eyes and yellow hair, his clean-shaved face, and his tight, short tunic. Sidonius had probably seen with his own eyes that picturesque wedding procession,[4] in which the princely young Sigismer strode along behind his horses glittering with jewel-studded trappings, himself ablaze with scarlet and gold; and followed by the young warriors of his staff in their short green tunics, edged with purple, and armed with lances and battle-axes. The description of Theodoric II.,[5] his person, his habits, and his court, is known to most readers of history. It is from the pen of a man who had sat at Theodoric's table and played at dice with him. The smallest details of the king's personal appearance are noted, his bushy eyebrows, his sweeping eyelashes, the delicate lines of the nose and lips, the clean-shaved face, the enormous muscles of back and leg, the combination in the whole physique of refinement and strength, of the high-bred, self-contained ruler of men with the hunter and the warrior. His religious observance is regular, but more a matter of habit and self-discipline than of devotion. His day is that of a man who allows not a moment to idleness. In affairs of state he listens intently, and says little. He is a keen sportsman, like his ancestors, and seldom misses his aim. At his table the dishes are distinguished by delicate cookery rather than by costli-

[1] *Carm.* vii. 455. Cf. Claud. *de Bell. Get.* 481.

[2] Sid. *Carm.* vii. 369; *Ep.* viii. 6, § 15.

[3] *Carm.* vii. 236.

[4] *Ep.* iv. 20.

[5] *Ep.* i. 2. Theodoric reigned from 453 to 466.

ness; and his plate not so much by its weight as by elegance of design. At the gaming-table he is eager to win, but he bears his losses with a smile, and he takes his lucky throws in calm silence. He lays aside for the time the dignity of the prince, encourages free and easy intercourse, and fears nothing so much as to be feared.

Yet, in spite of the vividness of these sketches of barbarian life, the student who expects to find in Sidonius clear and definite judgments on the relations of the Western Empire to its new guests or invaders, or forecasts of its future, will, for the most part, be doomed to disappointment. There are indeed in the Panegyrics, as we shall see presently, occasional flashes of political insight. But the letters are singularly barren of information or reflection on the great perils and problems of the time. Men like Sidonius were far more interested in their friendships, their social pleasures, and their literary pursuits, than in public affairs. They have far more ambition to win admiration for their very perverse literary efforts than to satisfy the curiosity of the historical inquirer of a later age. Yet the letter of Sidonius on the court of Theodoric, apparently written only to gratify curiosity, or to exhibit tricks of ingenious and vivid phrase, had in all probability a serious political purpose.

There is little doubt that, in his early manhood, Sidonius had taken part in a movement, the aim of which was to found a strong Gallic party [1] which, with the aid of the Visigoths, should exercise a powerful influence on the Empire, or perhaps restore the quasi-independence of the days of Postumus and Victorinus.[2] The spectacle of the weakness of the central government was humiliating. It could not protect its subjects, whilst its fiscal oppression was every day growing more cruel. We have only a glimpse of the intrigues and secret diplomacy of this party of Gallic independence; but we can

[1] Chaix, *Apoll. Sidon.* i. p. 79. [2] Treb. Poll. *Tyr. Trig.* 6.

discern that Avitus and his family were deeply involved in them. Avitus himself, who with Tonantius Ferreolus had secured the support of the first Theodoric against Attila, was on the most friendly terms with Theodoric II. Sidonius too was received at the Gothic court, and the description of the king's character and habits, to which we have referred, was sent to Agricola, one of the sons of Avitus. The letter was probably not intended merely for Agricola's eyes, who must have heard often from his father the tales of his intercourse with the Gothic royal family. It is not an improbable surmise that Sidonius knew that the letter would be handed about, and that he wished to give a favourable impression of Theodoric to the younger members of the party who were working for the Gallo-Gothic alliance. That alliance bore fruit in the elevation of Avitus to the throne by the united voice of the mixed Roman and Gothic assembly at the castle of Ugernum.[1] And the Panegyric on his father-in-law, which we shall presently review, is at once the history of the movement, and the fullest and clearest exposition which Sidonius has left of his views on the problems of the time.

The hopes of Sidonius and his party were dashed for the moment by the fall of Avitus. Yet we can discover traces of one more effort to set up an imperial representative of the united Roman and Gothic races in opposition to Majorian. The centre of the movement was Lyons, and once more the Gallo-Romans had Gothic, and possibly Burgundian, support. That Sidonius was deeply involved in the resistance to Majorian appears from the Panegyric on that Emperor,[2] in which, as he frankly confesses, the poet made a return for the clemency with which he had been treated by the conqueror. The traces of

[1] Apoll. Sidon. *Carm.* vii. 572; cf. Sirmond's ed. p. 135.

[2] *Carm.* v. 574; *Praef.* l. 13: serviat ergo tibi servati lingua poetae atque meae vitae laus tua sit pretium; *Ep.* i. 11; cf. Chaix, *Apoll. Sid.* i. 104; Fertig, *Sid.* i. 9.

the struggle are faint and few. But the Chronicles tell us of a peace concluded between Majorian and Theodoric after a battle in which the Goths were defeated,[1] and we learn from Sidonius that Lyons and the surrounding country suffered heavily by the exhaustion following on siege and pillage. The blow was a crushing one, and the good-nature of the conqueror to the party which had opposed him made the victory complete.[2] Henceforth Sidonius abandoned all dreams of using the Goths in the interests of Gallo-Roman ambition. The accession of Euric, who was at once more rapacious and more intolerant than his predecessor, clouded all hopes of coming to terms with the invaders, at least in the mind of a man like Sidonius. The attempt of the reckless prefect Arvandus to do so implied a severance of Gaul from the empire of Anthemius,[3] and a partition of the province between the Goths and Burgundians. Sidonius was, strange to say, the personal friend of Arvandus, and, although he was prefect of Rome, when Arvandus was tried for treason, he gave the traitor his official countenance and support.[4] This is undoubtedly a blot on the character of Sidonius, and it is hard to account for his conduct, especially when we remember that Tonantius Ferreolus, a close friend of Sidonius, was the leading prosecutor of the culprit. But the theory that the poet was involved in the intrigues of Arvandus is justly discredited by those who know most of that obscure period. The later years of Sidonius were troubled by the repeated assaults of the Visigoths on the independence of Auvergne.

[1] Idat. *Chron.*, legati . . . veniunt ad Gallaecios nuntiantes Majorianum et Theudoricum regem firmissima inter se pacis jura sanxisse, Gothis in quodam certamine superatis.

[2] See the description of the banquet given by Majorian at Arles after the games, to which some of the leaders in the hostile movement were invited. Sid. *Ep.* i. 11 ; cf. Chaix, i. 137.

[3] Sid. *Ep.* i. 7, § 5, pacem cum Graeco imperatore (*i.e.* Anthemio) dissuadens, . . . cum Burgundionibus Gallias dividi debere confirmans ; cf. Chaix, i. 300.

[4] Sid. *Ep.* i. 7, § 5 ; cf. Fertig, i. 18.

He was now bishop of the district, and had thrown upon him the double duty of defending both the liberty and the faith of his people. He suffered personally for his patriotism by imprisonment for a time in the fortress of Livia. And his last recorded utterance on political subjects[1] is the pathetic and powerful denunciation of the weakness and treachery which abandoned Auvergne to the Visigoths.

Yet in spite of the high official standing of Sidonius, and his experience of the great world, his letters tell us far less about the general course of government and the fortunes of the Empire than we should have expected. This is specially marked in those letters, otherwise very interesting, in which he describes his second visit to Rome in 467.[2] As soon as it was known in Gaul that Anthemius had been raised to the throne of the West, the leaders determined to send a deputation to lay before the new Emperor the condition of the province, threatened by the quiet advance of the Burgundians, and more openly harassed and assailed by the ambitious and intolerant king of the Visigoths. The maladministration of the Roman officials had also reached a height which had become almost unendurable. Sidonius, one of the deputies, received an imperial summons to Rome,[3] a document which enabled him to command the facilities of the posting service on the great roads and rivers on his journey. We see that that service,[4] in spite of all the disorganisation described in the Code,[5] was still uninterrupted between Lyons and Rome. There is not a hint in the letter of any trace of the effect of the invasions and troubles of the time. The writer's mind is occupied with mythological and historical reminiscences, or the

[1] *Ep.* vii. 7.

[2] *Ib.* i. 5, 6, and 7; Mommsen, Praef. xlviii; Chaix, i. 265.

[3] *Ep.* i. 5, . . . publicus cursus usui fuit sacris apicibus accito.

[4] *Ib.* i. 5, ubi sane moram vianti non veredorum paucitas sed amicorum multitudo faciebat.

[5] *C. Th.* viii. 5 *passim*; v. *supra*, p. 239.

charm of stream and woodland. As he shoots on a swift barge down the Po,[1] he thinks of the sisters of Phaethon dropping tears of amber, or of the Tityrus of Virgil's *Eclogues*. He is charmed with the concert of birds, whose sounds float to him from sedge and brake; but he seems never to have had thought of the legions who, sixty years before, mustered on those river banks under Stilicho to oppose the hordes of barbarism. When he comes to Ravenna, he can describe, with the vividness of wanton antithesis,[2] its bad water and endless canals, its trading monks, its burglars and sleepy magistrates, but there is not a word of Ravenna when it was the seat of empire and the shelter of the Emperor, not a word about the tragic death of the great statesman and warrior, who fell a victim to the blind hatred of the races and faiths which he wished to reconcile, and was lured to his doom from his asylum at the altar of Christ.[3] When Sidonius arrived at Rome, Anthemius was about to assume the consulship, and the marriage of his daughter with Ricimer, the German master of the army, was about to be celebrated. It was only twelve years since the city had been sacked by the Vandals and Berbers. For fourteen days it had been given up to fire and sword.[4] Although the actual damage to public buildings and monuments was hardly such as to justify the reproach immortalised in the word "Vandalism," yet the loss and destruction of movable wealth must have been enormous. Gold and silver plate from the senatorial palaces, ancient statues of incalculable artistic value, the sacred vessels of the Jewish temple, which had been undisturbed since the time of Titus, along with crowds of noble captives, were

[1] *Ep.* i. 5, Ticini cursoriam escendi, etc.

[2] *Ep.* i. 8, in qua palude . . . rerum omnium lege perversa muri cadunt aquae stant, turres fluunt naves sedent, algent balnea domicilia conflagrant, sitiunt vivi natant sepulti, etc. etc.

[3] Zos. v. 34.

[4] Prosp. *Chron.* ad a. 455; Jordan. *Get.* c. 45; cf. Gregorovius, *Hist. of Rome in Middle Ages*, i. 210.